



# The Foundations of Flourishing and our Obligations to Infants

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## Table of Contents

Introduction .....	8
Chapter 1 - Flourishing, Obligations to Children, and Autonomy.....	22
Flourishing.....	23
Attributes of flourishers.....	26
Obligations to Children .....	32
Autonomy .....	39
Conclusion.....	43
Chapter 2 - Empirical Evidence .....	46
Attachment Theory .....	47
Neuroscientific Evidence.....	53
Childcare .....	61
Mothers and Fathers.....	67
Conclusion.....	76
Chapter 3 - Liberalism .....	79
The Liberal State and Its Role Regarding Children.....	81
Public and Private Spheres .....	85
Nozick's Liberalism.....	88
Kant .....	92
Mill .....	92
Capitalism.....	98
Conclusion.....	101
Chapter 4 - Feminism & Motherhood.....	103
Feminism.....	104
Difference feminism.....	109

Motherhood.....	113
Background .....	113
Motherhood Today .....	117
Conclusion .....	124
Chapter 5 - An Ethic of Social, Emotional, and Moral Wellbeing.....	126
Ethics of Care .....	128
Slote's Ethics of Care and Empathy .....	132
Gilligan's Reframing of the Ethics of Care.....	136
An Alternative Autonomy .....	138
The Ethic of Social, Emotional and Moral Wellbeing.....	142
Families .....	143
Conclusion .....	147
Chapter 6 - Love .....	150
What Love Confers.....	152
Duty to Love .....	155
The Components of Love .....	159
Expansiveness of Love .....	164
Conclusion.....	169
Chapter 7 - Policy Issues.....	172
The State .....	173
Practical Problems .....	179
Career.....	179
Remuneration .....	180
Superannuation .....	181
Education .....	182
Lack of Status and Respect .....	183

Family.....	185
Developing Solutions Through Policy .....	185
Career.....	186
Remuneration .....	187
Superannuation .....	190
Education .....	191
Value of Motherhood .....	192
Supporting Families .....	193
Communities.....	196
Conclusion.....	198
Conclusion.....	201
Bibliography .....	209

## **Abstract**

In this thesis I argue that we have a moral obligation to create the kind of conditions that will assist infants to acquire the foundational brain functioning which will enable them to flourish. These conditions, according to neuroscientific evidence, include immersion in a loving, responsive environment with an enduring other. Yet, an obligation to commit to such a relationship would seem to compromise a parent's right to be a fully-developed autonomous individual themselves. Thus we are faced with a dilemma in which the rights of the child seem pitted against the rights of the parent – usually the mother.

I suggest that a way through this impasse is to challenge some assumptions about what it takes for an adult to be a fully developed individual. In particular, the liberalist tradition has assumed that autonomy and independence are the characteristics of a fully-developed person. Feminists have largely accepted this assumption and this has often led to the conclusion that women need to adopt traditional male roles – as paid employment was where status and respect resided, and was the means to independence. Of course, to take on such roles women have needed to engage in work and utilize childcare.

I argue that the dilemma can be resolved by rejecting the liberal model of autonomy in favour of an alternative model, according to which true maturation is found in interdependence and social affiliation. Rather than being an obstacle to one's own development, the demanding relationship involved in loving and nurturing a child will contribute to a parent's development as a fully mature individual.

# *Introduction*

What if it could be shown that a child's ability to later flourish could be compromised by placing them into childcare facilities during infancy? Wouldn't we have to rethink the way we go about making choices about infant caring arrangements? Answering these questions is the undertaking of this thesis. I think it is fair to say that parents and the state want the same thing – for children to grow up to become flourishing individuals who are able to fully participate in society. While it is easy to make this statement, just how we bring this about is not a straightforward question; so many variables are involved in raising children. At the same time there is evidence available that tells us we are doing something wrong. In Australia, for instance, one in four young people aged 16-24 have a mental disorder (Australian-Government & Bureau-of-Statistics 2007). Around the same number of five year olds have been measured in the Australian Early Development Census 2015 as being either developmentally at risk or developmentally vulnerable on social and emotional scores (Australian-Government 2016, p. 15). This situation is not confined to Australia, however. Belfer (2008) reports that:

Current global epidemiological data consistently reports that up to 20% of children and adolescents suffer from a disabling mental illness; that suicide is the third leading cause of death among adolescents; and that up to 50% of all adult mental disorders have their onset in adolescence (p. 226).

Neuroscientific investigations may be able to shed some light on what is driving such data. The evidence is showing that mental wellbeing is greatly influenced by the way our brain develops during infancy; it hinges on our being immersed in a loving, responsive, and enduring relationship with a nurturing other for the first three years of life. Despite this evidence, parents are increasingly encouraged to prioritise work participation over childcare, and to place their infants in childcare facilities - ensuring, I would argue, that infants will not receive the consistent, responsive, and loving care of the quality that research shows they require. One of the main objectives of this thesis therefore will be to investigate the nature of obligations to our children. I will conclude that we do indeed have a moral obligation to create for our infants the kind of conditions that assist them to acquire the foundational brain functioning that will enable them to flourish. These conditions include the infant being



immersed in a loving, responsive environment with an enduring other such that they develop a sense of belonging. Creating such conditions conflicts with the kinds of obligations parents also have to fulfil their *own* sense of self and to seek their own autonomy, often resulting in the placement of their infants in childcare. This situation represents a serious and important moral dilemma which I will address throughout the thesis.

In an attempt to solve the dilemma which appears to place the needs of infants in direct opposition to the needs of parents, I will examine neuroscientific data which provides evidence to support attachment theory, first proposed in the 1950s. Attachment theory essentially posits that the way we become bonded to our attachment figure during infancy creates a template on which our later social and emotional wellbeing is patterned. Infancy I will show, is also the period of time when our brain is expanding at a faster speed than at any other time in our lives, growing in response to the stimulants in its immediate environment, causing development to head in a positive or negative direction. I will argue that this neuroscientific evidence strongly suggests that the infancy period of life is more critical to our later wellbeing than we have previously recognised. What is more, since it is people who constitute the bedrock of society, the way infants are nurtured is fundamentally important not only to them as individuals, but to the future society they will populate.

I will make a controversial argument - that is nevertheless supported by the research evidence - that mothers are the preferred candidates for undertake the caring of infants for at least the first eighteen months of life. I will argue that mothers have an original advantage in the caring of their infants for three reasons. In the first instance, it is women who develop an intimate bond with their baby during the nine months of pregnancy, chatting, holding, soothing, and feeling their baby move, grow, and develop inside their bodies. Second, the hormones that flood mothers' bodies before and after childbirth prime her to love her child in a lifelong bond, unrivalled by any other. Third, it is also mothers' bodies which produce breastmilk, the most nourishing substance known for human physiological and brain development. These mechanisms usually ensure that it is the mother who will become the primary attachment figure. Research also reveals that women have a greater sensitivity in many nurturing domains, enhancing her ability to deliver a critical level of nurturing. It is a level of sensitivity that men do not have.

There are some clear questions that emerge from my statements which will require additional work. Such questions will form the basis of the chapters of this thesis. Prior to detailing the contents of the chapters, however, I need to qualify some of the things I will go on to say. First, although I will describe the kinds of nurturing which are believed to support the best outcomes for infants, I want to acknowledge that it will not always be possible for parents to deliver optimal nurturing. Rarely does anyone achieve the ideal in the goals they pursue, so I do not mean to imply that anyone who does not attain such an ideal is failing; rather, I propose the ideal as an aspirational goal, knowing that we will fall short occasionally.

I also wish to address why I often refer to the mother, as opposed to care-giver or parent, both gender-neutral terms. It is mothers who have, for all of human history, carried pregnancies, given birth, breastfed, and usually nurtured their infants, and this remains the case; using the word mother is an acknowledgment of this. It is also a term which signifies an intimate relationship generally associated with loving warmth, unlike cooler terms such as attachment figure or carer. This is not to say that others such as fathers, grandparents, foster carers, and parents of the same gender cannot also provide a relationship that supports infants to become flourishing individuals. In most cases I argue that what they are delivering is mothering 'per se'. Indeed, I will argue that the single most important requirement for infants is that the adults who take the primary care of them convey to the infant that they are unconditionally accepted, approved of, and provided responsive caring, resulting in the infant feeling contentment most of the time. Such a thing can be conveyed in the absence of the biological mother -I acknowledge that in some instances the mother is unable to provide the kinds of essential care their infants need.

I will also add that, while the position I take in this thesis does rest on empirical data, I acknowledge this is as a philosophical paper and not a place where the veracity of empirical evidence can be tested; therefore I ask the reader to suppose for the sake of argument that the scientific evidence I am presenting is true. I believe that philosophical enquiry needs to be receptive to scientific evidence, where applicable, so that philosophers are able to integrate new information into their philosophical deliberations.

I will also frequently refer to a collective 'we'. I use this term not to assume that the reader is always in agreement with what I am saying, but rather because it reflects my view that we as reader and writer are sharing our thinking. Such a term is also reflective of my stance on human interdependence, which I will later clarify.

There will be objectors to several issues I raise, and these issues will be addressed within the chapters as each topic arises. Some will challenge my interpretation of the evidence showing that any one particular person or persons needs to become a primary attachment figure to the infant. Others may question whether the neuroscientific data proves that women are best placed to nurture and spend the majority of their time with their babies during infancy. Some will rightly argue that the brain remains flexible, and that therefore any problems that may have developed through negative nurturing experiences can be ameliorated later in childhood and into adulthood. Others still will reject my suggestion that, despite the many and varied arguments that make up different moral theories, none have recognised the significance of our early life experience and its relevance to our moral character development. There will also be objections to my support of Gilligan (1993, 2014), Held (2006), and Slote's (2007) claim that moral theories have not adequately taken account of the concept of human interdependence, instead placing emphasis on independence and self-sufficiency. Their argument, that morality must also incorporate our need for human caring, provides a valuable baseline from which this thesis will develop. Further objections may arise from my argument that the nuclear family offers inadequate supports to those who undertake parenting full-time and to their partners.

Within the many debates inside moral philosophy, there is a relatively unattended space in relation to infants and their specific care requirements. While many philosophers from Plato (380BC/1992) through to very recent writers such as Blustein (1982), Austin (2007), and Archard (2015b) have pointed to the importance of parental influence in shaping the minds of the young, what has not been apparent in the philosophical literature on obligations and duties to children is an understanding of the long-term influence that nurturing *during infancy* has on later social, emotional, and moral wellbeing. This, I will argue, is important to examine. In this thesis I am concerned with the ideal situations in which infants can establish the foundational brain functioning that can establish their later ability to flourish. The ideal is not easy or necessarily achievable. What I set out in the thesis are two major

ideas. Firstly, what constitutes the ideal that infants need to receive and secondly, what the solutions may be that can enable the ideal to become a more tangible reality. I will now briefly discuss the content of each of the chapters.

In Chapter One I will discuss the nature of ‘flourishing’ as understood in some ancient notions and conceptions, and by some current philosophers. I will then compare and contrast these ideas with Abraham Maslow’s (1950/1973) exploration of those he termed ‘self-actualizers’, and with research by Barbara Fredrickson (2009). Both investigated the antecedents of positive wellbeing. I will argue that a synthesis of these philosophical and psychological ideas can offer the most fitting description of what it means to flourish. Additionally, I suggest that this evidence supports the notion that the antecedents of flourishing are the same antecedents as those for wellbeing. It is universally agreed, I will claim, that to flourish is to possess something of great internal and external value. It is a quality that people not only wish to possess themselves but also want for their children.

I will then explore how we may become flourishing individuals, suggesting that neuroscientific evidence - which I will detail in Chapter Two - tells us the foundations of flourishing are laid down during infancy, determined by the way we are nurtured and become attached to our parents. I will argue that, while it may be claimed that people can develop the attributes they need to become flourishing adults later in life, and that research shows this is possible, it is only possible through months and years of daily practice. I will argue therefore that the much more direct way of developing the inner resources needed to flourish, the way we are nurtured during infancy, is the most efficient. At the same time, the provision of the style of nurturing that is required in order to lay down the foundational pathways needed for flourishing – the receipt of responsive, loving time with an enduring other – is in apparent conflict with the active pursuit of parental autonomy.

This conflict, I will argue, requires us to evaluate what it is we are morally obliged to provide to our children. I will review some texts which discuss parents’ moral obligations to their children and which reveal that, while there is consensus on the need to provide well for them, authors such as Archard (2003, 2010b, 2015a) and Blustein (1982, 2012) take the view that we are only obligated to supply *adequate* parenting goods to children, their concerns

stemming from the fear that parental autonomy may be compromised if *optimal* parental care is offered.

I will then examine the nature of autonomy, why we want to become autonomous, how we gain autonomous goods, and why we consider them to be of such value.

Finally, I will argue that the utilisation of childcare as the antidote to the possible loss of parental autonomy caused by taking time out of the workforce is incompatible with the parental obligation to ensure their children are equipped to become flourishing adults. Paid child carers, I will argue, do not have a pre-existing bond with the infant, a bond believed necessary for the infant's wellbeing, while infant-to-carer ratios are too high to enable carers to deliver optimal nurturing, even if they did manage to develop an attachment relationship.

In Chapter Two I will provide the evidence that proves the claim I will make in Chapter One, that the foundations of flourishing are developed in the warm intimacy of their primary attachment figure, and therefore that children's wellbeing may be compromised by placing them in childcare during this sensitive period of development. First, however, I will investigate attachment theory which hypothesises that bonding positively with a loved attachment figure provides infants with a sense of security vital to how they see themselves in the world. I will then present the neuroscientific evidence that has both reinforced and extended attachment theory. This will show that what is taking place in an infant's brain is far more complex and experience dependent, and has much longer-term consequences, than we have previously understood, consequences for the child's social, emotional, and moral wellbeing.

The science I will present also provides evidence which establishes that mothers are the preferred candidate to undertake the preponderance of nurturing of their infants for a period of time. This is a controversial claim, but I will show in this chapter that the empirical evidence for it is strong. Indeed, I will make a normative claim that the state ought to ensure that mothers undertake the primary, full-time caring role of their infants for at least the first eighteen months of life, and thereafter that an attachment figure assume the role until the child reaches the age of three.

Alas, the evidence also suggests that many parents do not know how to nurture effectively - around 40% of infants do not develop a sense of security in their relationship with their primary attachment figure (Moullin, Waldfogel & Washbrook 2014, p. 3). Called insecure attachment, this has been shown to lead to many negative, long-term outcomes for children. The antidote to this situation, I will argue, is to provide parents with appropriate information to assist them to understand how to nurture well and how to apply these positive nurturing techniques to their infants. While this is not the primary problem of attachment it offers a solution in addressing parental deficits which impact on the emotional wellbeing of infants. I will also posit that parents will require a range of supports to both acquire this knowledge and to implement its advice with their infants. This will inform the basis of the second normative claim I will make: that parents ought to receive an appropriate education, as well as the necessary financial and socio-emotional supports, in order that they can provide the best care to their infants. Unfortunately these normative claims conflict with some strands of thought within two theories that we generally live by: liberalism and feminist theory – theories which I will address at length in Chapters Three and Four.

In Chapter Three, I will examine liberalism to ask if the liberal state is the right body to facilitate the changes I am suggesting, flowing from the normative claims I have made. I will also discuss whether liberalism offers the right framework to live by, and in that context consider the overriding dilemma of this thesis: how do we navigate between two competing moral conventions, the need for parental autonomy and the needs infants have for their mother's time.

First, I will examine the liberal state's role in the care and protection of its citizens and, importantly, their children. I will discuss the views of Archard (2003, 2015b), Austin (2007), and Richards (Richards 2010) who have written at length on this issue. I will argue that, despite their having a general belief in a need for limitations to state powers, they agree that the state nonetheless has a substantial role to play in ensuring children are supported in ways which enable them to reach certain standards, or possess a particular skill set. I will conclude that indeed the state ought to take a more substantial role in parents' lives in order that the normative claims I have made can be responded to appropriately; however,

requiring the state to intervene to a more substantial degree conflicts with modern views about privacy.

I will therefore ask how far the state can step into the private realm before violating individual freedom, a concept fundamentally important to liberals. I will argue that there has been a resurgence in the view that the state should be increasingly hands-off. One proponent of this more extreme liberalist view is Robert Nozick (1974). I will explore his ideas at length and then compare and contrast them with two older, influential liberalist thinkers, Emmanuel Kant (1785) and John Stuart Mill (1897). I will argue that while Kant and Mill's legacy has based liberalism in part in morality, as well as in other concerns, that more recently writers such as Nozick have driven the focus away from these orientations. While individualism and autonomy have long been central concerns of liberalism, I will argue that Nozick's overrating of these ideas contains an inherent mistake, that is, - it orients Western society toward the belief that individualism and self-sufficiency are the ideal markers of maturation.

I will also argue that liberalist ideas about freedom from the state have supported capitalism's expansion and have supported the state's acceptance that economic gains attributed to capitalism offer the formula for its citizens' wellbeing. I will argue that this has led to the state's neglect of views which place importance on human relationships and a sense of community. Thus, as liberalism does not recognise or value the psychosocial needs of individuals, it does not appear that it can offer a model to resolve the dilemma which families face, the dilemma of determining their priorities when there is a conflict between the care arrangements they make for their infants and their own needs.

In Chapter Four I will argue that, at a time in Western history when women are actively pursuing their own autonomy to a greater degree than was previously possible, to suggest that it is women who ought forego their autonomy in favour of spending the preponderance of their time with their infants conflicts with the prevailing expectations that women should return to work. It is therefore appropriate that I investigate this tension through a feminist lens and ask whether or not it can offer a workable solution to the dilemma at hand.

I will first discuss some factors that contributed to women being viewed as inferior, arguing that the development of feminism has rightly focused on the need to improve their status

and autonomy. I will also argue that feminists have generally accepted that the liberalistic ideals of individualism and autonomy offered the correct models for which to strive in life. These ideals were generally linked to the kinds of activities which men typically undertook – working and earning. These activities were also linked to the gaining of status and respect. Rightly wanting these things, women gradually turned away from their traditional roles in favour of activities that attracted status and respect –earning and working (for wages). I will argue that negative evaluations of women in general have resulted in women wanting to de-identify from womanhood and reject their gender-associated roles.

I will also investigate difference feminism, which argues that women should not have to fit into a male-defined framework to gain status and respect. Difference feminism as a theory gained little ground however, and the assumption that work offered the recipe for gaining status, respect, autonomy and independence persisted. There were two assumptions that emanated from this. The first was that the way men conducted their lives was the *only* way to gain status and respect. The second assumption was that nurturing was of little value and that who undertook their care was inconsequential to infants.

I will next briefly examine the history of motherhood, primarily through the writings of Julia Kristeva (1985), then explore the literature of feminist writers Rich (1976), and Ruddick (1989) whose ideas primarily reject the negative appraisal of motherhood. I will argue that, while these authors rightly identify that paternalistic structures as well as a lack of women's voices entering the public domain have contributed to the lack of status of women, the dominant feminist voices which rejected female difference have entrenched the notion that female roles are to be rejected. I will finally argue that, as a consequence of women's focus turning away from their families to their own autonomy, neither women nor men have investigated the possible consequences of placing their infants into childcare.

In Chapter Five, I will seek to resolve the primary dilemma of this thesis. I will first discuss the development of the ethics of care and then examine Held's (2006) work which provides a thorough explanation of the ethic which I believe is a good starting place. I will then turn to Slote (2007) who argues for a broader discussion around the concepts of empathy and respect within the ethics of care, then outline Gilligan's (2014) most recent claims that, according to contemporary scientific data, those factors previously identified as markers of



health, such as independence, are actually signs of moral injury. I will argue that each of these authors contribute to a growing expansion of care ethics; together they offer useful insights which can help resolve the dilemma at hand.

I will then examine an alternative view of autonomy. Influenced by concepts which emanated from the ethics of care, autonomy is based on the premise that we are first and foremost interdependent beings. I will argue that there are some limitations to this notion of alternative autonomy, and will further suggest that the application of a Millsian approach can support the view that the way we conduct ourselves should reflect our social attitude toward others and develop our authentic and self-guided nature. I will call this social autonomy.

I will then bring together the above arguments which show that maturation is found not in independence and self-sufficiency, but in our interdependence. I will claim that flourishing research confirms that our empathetic, accepting, and social nature is far more indicative of wellbeing than is the idea that we ought to uphold our separate, individualistic, and self-sufficient aspects of being. When we add the knowledge that comes from neuroscientific research, we can see that the most efficient way of ensuring we develop a socially autonomous view is to provide attachment parenting to our infants. I will argue that bringing these ideas together naturally expands the ethics of care into an ethic of social, emotional, and moral wellbeing.

Finally, I will briefly look at the kinds of pressures faced by families. I will argue that when the ethic of social, emotional, and moral wellbeing is understood, families will see that the liberalist notion of autonomy cannot offer the ideal model of maturation, and that they have been working to an erroneous ideal that cannot offer them the happiness they seek. As a consequence, when families understand that happiness and wellbeing are found in deep, interdependent relationships, they are more likely to understand the value and importance of attachment parenting and to believe that staying home to nurture their infants full-time does not diminish their autonomy - rather, it enhances it. This naturally dissolves the dilemma. I will argue that there is no necessary conflict between the needs of infants and the needs of parents when parents realise that their joint wellbeing is to be found in each other.

In Chapter Six, I consider a word that is noticeable by its absence from philosophical literature, yet is profoundly important to the infant and parent relationship, I argue – and that is the word *love*. The reason it has been absent from debates thus far is that the philosophers and neuroscientists I have quoted appear reluctant to use this particular word. I will argue that love provides a critically important volitional impetus to care for and protect our infants, however, and when effectively communicated enables the infant to feel a sense of belonging that is foundational to their wellbeing. Without understanding its critical role we will have a limited view of what is taking place within the parent/child relationship.

While love, often referred to as *eros*, has been discussed at length in philosophy, there has been little analysis of parental love (Mullin 2007). Three philosophers who have written articles principally on the topic of love in conjunction with children are Liao (2006a; 2006b), Cowden (2012) and Solheim (1999). They have largely discussed love in terms of parental duties to love; a topic I will critique at length. Liao (2006a) argues for instance, that parents do have a duty to love their children, whereas Cowden (2012) argues that love cannot be commanded and therefore cannot be required as a duty. Solheim on the other hand, suggests that if parents can't love their children they should be required to at least 'try' to love their children. While these are important issues, I will contend that such arguments are wrongly focused: what appears to be a lack of love may actually be an inability to convey love. I will assert that this is possible because there are two components of love that can be separated – the emotional feeling of love, and the activity of expressing love. I will argue that it is possible to feel the emotion of love, yet be unable to convey that love, in such cases leaving children to feel unloved.

I will argue that understanding that love is a skill as suggested by Fromm (1961) and populist philosopher Alain de Botton's (2016) (whom I will look to in the absence of general philosophical literature on how love functions), and that both aspects of love must be continually active, can assist parents to understand where they may be going wrong. When these elements (both the feeling and conveying of love) are experienced by the child, the child reflects this love back to the parent; thus love operates in a natural feedback loop which expands between parent and child, entwining them on an emotional as well as physical level. I will argue that it is this expansive quality of love that ensures parents repeatedly provide a level of nurturing that ensures a sense of belonging and a sense of

security will develop in their infants. This is what distinguishes parents and other attachment figures from those who may be required to simply care for our child. I will argue that child carers have not undergone the original physiological processes that stimulate love for a particular child, and they therefore cannot provide the quality of care infants require. Finally, I will argue that this is why parents, and mothers in particular, need to undertake the nurturing of their children during the critical phase of infancy.

In Chapter Seven I will turn to the practical implications that arise from fulfilling the normative claims of this thesis – that mothers should dedicate at least the first 18 months of their children’s lives to intensive nurturing. The first, and my main point in Chapter Seven, is that the state has certain responsibilities. I will argue that it falls to the state to respond to the claims I am making. The second aspect of this chapter will be suggestions as to how these responsibilities might be met.

I will first propose that the changes that need to take place will require the state to alter its priorities. I will argue that the state must adjust to new research evidence claiming that monetary policies alone cannot improve the wellbeing of its citizens. I will argue that the state needs to orient public policy toward the psychological needs of its people, because, as the evidence I have presented shows, the wellbeing of citizens can be considerably facilitated or impaired by the way they are nurtured during infancy. The state therefore needs to implement policies that will facilitate the nurturing of infants. Unless the state does address such issues, it will continue to inadequately attend to the psychological wellbeing of its citizens.

I will describe each of the central issues which represent barriers to mothers undertaking the nurturing of their infants full-time, and detail why each of these issues are a problem. These issues include: the negative effects associated with taking time out of the workforce; the lack of remuneration and superannuation; the lack of access to good information about what best supports their infant’s psychological wellbeing; the lack of value and status accorded to motherhood; and the lack of support associated with the nuclear family.

I will then propose solutions to each of the issues discussed, arguing that, while it is within the purview of the state to directly financially support mothers and to provide the social and emotional supports they require, these social and emotional supports ought to be delivered

to parents through community centres or neighbourhood houses, rather than directly by the state, so that parents may connect with and be supported by those who live close to them.

In the conclusion of this thesis I will bring together the various threads that have been woven throughout the chapters. I will discuss my argument from Chapter One that flourishing is a state we wish citizens to experience and that we ought to enable in our children. In Chapter Two I outlined research data showing that it is during infancy that the brain lays down important and durable neural networks, establishing positive or negative emotional, social, and moral foundations, which either support or act as barriers to the child becoming a flourishing individual. I also argued that the best environment in which to foster flourishing was for infants to be nurtured by their mother for the first eighteen months and by an attachment figure until the child is three years old. Indeed, I made a normative claim to this effect. I argued however that making such a claim at a time when women are increasingly claiming a right to return to work shortly after childbirth presented a clear ethical dilemma. I made a second normative claim: that parents ought to be provided with both the education and other support services they may require to enable optimal attachment parenting for their infants.

I then argued in Chapter Three that, while the liberal state bears the responsibility for implementing the changes I have claimed as necessary, liberalism itself is moving toward a less and less interventionist state. It will therefore be less sympathetic to supporting greater intervention by the state as I propose. In Chapter Four I examined feminism, arguing that, despite voices to the contrary, feminists have largely accepted the liberalist model of autonomy which promotes individualism and self-sufficiency. As men appeared to acquire these attributes through their employment, and women wanted these thing in preference to having no status or respect in their traditional caring roles, the view that the solution to this dilemma was for women to become employed was reinforced.

Then in Chapter Five I showed that it was possible to resolve this theses central dilemma. I argued that a synthesis of ideas from each chapter offered a broad consensus of evidence showing that happiness and human maturation reside in interdependence and a socially autonomous perspective on life. I argued that the belief that autonomous persons are

exemplars of maturation is wrong, but that the acceptance of this belief had led to the citizens of the state working to an erroneous assumption: that independence and monetary wealth hold the keys to happiness. I also argued that, once parents have an understanding of where happiness resides, and that they have been clinging to a false perspective, the dilemma fails to be apparent, as their social autonomy is enhanced by being with another – a dependent, vulnerable other.

In Chapter Six I argued that there was a word which had been largely absent from the discussions thus far, yet was the most appropriate word to describe the driver behind the parent/infant relationship; love. I argued that when love is conveyed well it is reflected from the child back to the parent and it expands in way best characterised by the infinity loop symbol. It is the existence of and the need for this magical substance that supports infants to develop foundational neural pathways which can support their ability to flourish. Love is most keenly felt and expressed by the infants primary attachment figure – usually their mother, ensuring they will deliver the kinds of goods their infants most need, something I have argued cannot be sourced in childcare.

Finally, I argued in Chapter Seven that, in order for the state to accommodate the changes I have suggested that will remove the impediments to full-time motherhood, it will need to accept that it has a greater responsibility for the wellbeing of its citizens. I argued that it can no longer rely on the promise of economic growth as the answer to human happiness. I also argued that the supports parents require to provide exemplary nurturing to their infants must be delivered through their communities and neighbourhood houses so that parents can also have the support they need in order to give to their infants.

# ***Chapter 1 - Flourishing, Obligations to Children, and Autonomy***

There may be no consensus as to precisely what flourishing consists in, but it is fair to say that it is universally agreed that to flourish is to possess something of great internal and external value. It is a concept that people not only wish to possess themselves but also want for their children. Yet, I will conclude in this chapter, that when parents pursue their own autonomy, as it is generally conceived, this pursuit is incompatible with the kinds of activities which enable their children to flourish. This is the dilemma I posed in the introduction, and the principal problem I will resolve later in the thesis.

I will in this chapter initially explore the original meaning of the word flourishing, which philosophers have debated for aeons, mainly in the quest to work out which attributes signify its attainment and how best to attain them. I will then look to a number of contemporary philosophers' and psychological researchers' notions of flourishing and their opinions on what it ultimately comprises. I will argue that a synthesis of their positions suggests that flourishing consists in having some quite specific attributes, such as being virtuous, being other-focused, and having high-level emotional and social wellbeing. I will discuss research which shows that people can acquire and develop these attributes, but only with months and years of the daily practice of particular techniques; however, I will also claim that there is a much more direct means of developing the kinds of inner resources that will support a person's ability to flourish, that is, the way they are nurtured during infancy, a topic I will examine at length in the following chapter. Yet the provision of the style of nurturing that is required in order to lay down the foundational pathways needed for flourishing – the receipt of responsive, loving time with an enduring other - is in conflict with the active pursuit of parental autonomy.

This conflict, I suggest, requires us to evaluate what it is we are morally obliged to provide to our children. I will review some literature relevant to this question, showing that, while there is consensus on the need to provide well for our children, authors such as Archard (2015b) and Blustein (2012) take the view that we are only obligated to supply *adequate*

parenting goods to children. Austin (2007) disagrees, stating that parents ought to provide the goods children need to the best of their ability. I will discuss these differing views at length, and argue that Austin is right to require the best care from parents. Without such care, children may not be afforded the conditions in which they might flourish.

Both Archard (2015b) and Blustein's (2012) reasoning for advocating the lesser model of parenting is precipitated by their concern that a parent's autonomy may be compromised if indeed they do provide optimal parental care for their children. To analyse this issue, I will investigate some views about autonomy. I will also consider whether autonomy can be viewed as being the kind of thing that adults have an obligation to provide for themselves. I will look at how we gain autonomous goods, as well as why we consider them to be of such value.

Finally, I will argue that the utilisation of childcare, as the antidote to the loss of parental autonomy caused by taking time out of the workforce, is incompatible with the parental obligation to ensure their children are equipped to become flourishing people. Paid child carers, I will argue, do not have a pre-existing bond with the infant, believed necessary for the infant's wellbeing.

## **Flourishing**

The idea that flourishing or happiness is what human beings should strive for as the ultimate good has been a topic of philosophical discussion since Ancient Greek times; however, although there has been a general acceptance of this concept, how it was to be achieved and measured has remained in contention. I suggest it is worthwhile investigating the Ancients' ideas about flourishing, as many of those ideas embody elements that are still important to today's conception of what it means to flourish.

It is posited that the word *eudaimonia* was the most commonly used word in ancient times to denote the concept of flourishing (Miller 2010, p. 599). Often referred to as happiness, Russell (2012) suggests that *eudaimonia* was used to represent or convey the suggestion that one was to seek 'a kind of complete, fulfilled, good life' (p. 15).

Daniel Russell's (2012) exploration of the ancient Greek meaning of eudaimonia, leads him to suggest there are three common threads that run through the Ancients' ideas. He lists these elements as:

[1] An account of practical reasoning on which eudaimonia is the final end for deliberation, [2] where eudaimonia is a good life for the one living it – that is, happiness – and as such, [3] a starting-point for thinking about the nature of human fulfilment, or virtue (p. 8).

In Russell's view, the Ancients believed eudaimonia was based in the ability to reason, an ability whose final end is human fulfilment or virtue. It is interesting to note that Russell describes the starting point as being either human fulfilment or virtue. These terms can have wildly varying meanings, so to suggest that these terms may be interchangeable requires some clarification. Russell (2012) himself is uncomfortable with the pairing of these terms. He posits that introducing virtue into the account of wellbeing was possibly 'a desperate move' because 'having developed an agent-centred account of the good, they then realized that they had to figure out what to say about morality, with its other-regarding focus' (p. 65).

Annas (1993) also regards virtue as central, but that she is not entirely clear where it sits in ancient tenets. She says there is a common fundamental question in ancient ethics which asks 'exactly what place virtue should have in one's life?' (p. 441). Further, Annas suggests 'there is the question of one's relations to others', while 'life is still taken to be aimed at some version of happiness' (p. 441). Despite the diversity of answers to these questions, Annas (1993) says there are some fundamental areas of similarity: 'we have three elements: virtue, other-concern and happiness. Ancient ethical theories differ most obviously in the way they distribute their emphasis between these elements' (p. 441).

Miller (2010) suggests that the Stoics offered the clearest conception of happiness. He states that the Stoics' hypothesis went like this:

Since happiness is a life lived according to nature, all that we need to be happy is to live as nature intended us. Since nature intended us to be fully rational beings, it follows that reason is necessary for happiness. When we are rational, we are virtuous. So reason/virtue is the sole constituent of happiness (p. 601).

It is true to say that having a rational capacity appears to be a natural feature of being human as it appears to be common; however, even if we accept that reason is necessary for



happiness, to assume that rational thought is the sole determinant of happiness appears to assume a great number of other natural human attributes, such as our dependency on others and our universal need for culture, dance, music and song, to name but a few of those attributes, have no relevance to human happiness. Likewise, to assume that when we are rational we are also virtuous, as Miller claims, does not necessarily follow. While being virtuous, I agree, is one of the central elements of happiness, which I will detail in the following section, it alone provides too narrow a conception of happiness. It fails to explain how we can acquire the attributes of virtuousness simply from having the ability to reason.

Vitrano (2014), explores the writings of Epicurus, looking to his ideas on happiness. Epicurus argues, she says, 'that all of our actions' should be 'directed toward happiness', a state which she asserts he identifies with pleasure (p. 3). He does not advocate maximising hedonistic pleasures however: rather Vitrano (2014) claims that he advocates 'moderation in our pursuit of pleasure, and he emphasizes the importance of reducing the amount of pain we experience so that we can achieve the ideal life of tranquillity' (p. 3). Vitrano (2014) discusses how elements that were part of Epicurus' recipe for happiness, including self-control, friendship, cheerfulness, and simplicity, had as their end point 'freedom from pain in the body and trouble in the mind' (p. 16). Epicurus then, it seems, saw a link between happiness, or the lack of it, and disordered thinking.

Plato, I suggest, made a similar link. And this is why I have utilized Plato in this thesis as he provides an early example of a psychological perspective of wellbeing that pays attention to the association between psychology and wellbeing. While exploring what he believed constituted the good life, Plato said in the *Republic* that happiness was accessible to those who had the three parts of the soul working harmoniously together as they would work from a virtuous base and be moderate, courageous, and wise (Plato 380BC/1992, pp. 110-119 434-443). Plato is specific about the soul representing our internal make up which has three elements: the rational, the appetitive, and the spiritual (Plato 380BC/1992, pp. 110-119 434-443). Each aspect, he says, performs a unique function which can be understood when we think of our internal dialogues regarding such things as wanting to drink more alcohol. The rational part of our mind talks us out of having another drink as

we do not want to become drunk (Plato 380BC/1992, pp. 115/439a-439e). Each part, Plato said, worked cooperatively with the other, and, when it did so, harmony was produced.<sup>1</sup>

So Plato posits that happiness emanates from an internal condition – a balancing of the three parts of the soul; therefore the happy or eudemonic life, according to Plato, comes from first having a state of inner balance, a necessary condition from which just actions spring. Plato says he takes this state ‘to be a kind of health, fine condition, and well-being of the soul’, while the opposite internal form engenders vice (Plato 380BC/1992, p. 121 444e).

While we may criticise Plato for talking about what some may consider to be esoteric notions in his reference to the soul, I argue that his discussion, and indeed Epicurus’s ideas in reference to freedom from trouble in the mind, are analogous to the idea that we need to have emotional wellbeing in order to conduct ourselves virtuously. This idea, that we need an harmonious or tranquil interior, is, as I will discuss a little later in this chapter, an essential aspect of what we need to enable in our infants if we wish them to flourish. I suggest that the Ancients were able to correctly identify that there was a relationship between virtue, concern for others (other concern), and happiness, but that they remained unable to explain how these attributes interacted together. I will explain this interaction in Chapter Two.

### **Attributes of flourishers**

I have accepted that the ancient philosophers largely agreed that flourishing consisted in varying amounts of three elements: virtue, other concern, and happiness. I will now turn to some contemporary philosophers ideas on flourishing and what attributes of a person they believe indicate achievement of a flourishing state. I will also look to preliminary research undertaken by Abraham Maslow. I feel it is instructive to look to Maslow’s work as his ideas turned psychology’s gaze from the emotionally sick to the emotionally well in order to identify markers of wellbeing (Vella-Brodrick 2011). I will also look to Fredrickson’s (2009)

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<sup>1</sup> Plato states:

And we’ll call him wise because of that small part of himself that rules in him and makes those declarations and has within it the knowledge of what is advantageous for each part and for the whole soul, which is the community of all three parts (380BC/1992, p. 118).

research where she investigates the attributes which can effect positive emotional change. I will evaluate each of the theorist's ideas and argue that a synthesis of philosophical and psychological views can build a strong picture of the components of wellbeing and flourishing.

Human flourishing, Rasmussen (1999) asserts, is a term that has reappeared in philosophy in the last two decades. She argues that there are six elements vital to human flourishing. First she says flourishing is an objective good, 'a state of being, not mere feeling or experience' (p. 3). Second, Rasmussen (1999) says that flourishing 'is the ultimate end of human conduct, but it is not the only activity of inherent worth' (p. 3); rather, it is 'not a "dominant" end that reduces the value of everything else to that of a mere means' but a final end (p. 3). Third, Rasmussen says that 'Human flourishing is individualized and diverse ... Concretely speaking, no two cases of human flourishing are the same, and they are not interchangeable' (pp. 5-6). While this is somewhat true, there are also elements that are common to flourishers, which I shall detail a little later in this chapter. Fourth, Rasmussen also states that 'flourishing is agent-relative', ... 'the flourishing of each individual ... lies in the immanent activities that comprise the fulfilment of individual human beings' (p. 9). While people may have common traits, it is true that the nature of fulfilment, because of our inherent differences, will differ for each individual. Fifth, Rasmussen (1999) describes human flourishing as 'a self-directed activity', one which

... consists in a person's taking charge of his own life so as to develop and maintain those virtues for which he alone is responsible and which in most cases will allow him to attain the goods his life requires (p. 10).

While flourishing is a matter of self-direction, and a skill which can be developed during adult life, as will become apparent, its antecedents are developed during infancy. Finally, Rasmussen (1999) says that 'human beings are naturally social animals' and 'maturation requires a life with others' (p. 12). He states that

... we do not achieve our maturity like mushrooms, suddenly, all at one, with no engagement with one another. We have potentialities that are other-oriented, and we cannot find fulfilment without their actualization ... [and] having other concern is crucial to our maturation (p. 12).

These other-oriented needs, focus, and development, are, I believe, critical to our ability to flourish and are important to this thesis overall. It is a point that will be discussed in several later chapters.

Russell's (2012) investigations into the meaning of eudaimonia show he has an overall view of happiness similar to that of Rasmussen. Russell (2012) says eudaimonia

... is the sort of good life that is good for the one living it, a life experienced as rewarding and rich, and in which one finds one's existence as meaningful. Eudaimonia is also a life of completion and fulfilment, both in one's nature as a human being and as unique individual (p. 14).

Russell's description identifies a life's ambition, or a life we would like to experience, rather than a short-lived feeling. He also describes a life which is both meaningful and fulfilling, and one that honours what it means to be human, as well as what is unique individually. Moreover, he argues that 'part of human fulfilment is exercising practical wisdom' and 'emotional soundness', and when taken together they result in 'virtuous activity' (Russell 2012, p. 6). This statement appears to assume that virtuous activity is precipitated principally by two things: practical wisdom and emotional soundness. While I agree that both things are necessary for virtuous activity, there are other attributes that are necessary, such as being other focused.

A different concept is used by philosopher Mark Vernon to describe flourishing. Vernon (2008) says in *Wellbeing* that there are two distinct aspects of flourishing, using the terms higher and lower to differentiate them. He states that 'Lower flourishing is thriving in the everyday. It is having good friends, a happy family, fulfilling employment, pleasurable leisure' (p. 6). The second level, higher flourishing, is 'concerned with the larger perspective on life' (Vernon 2008, p. 6). Vernon (2008) says higher flourishing

... is prior to lower flourishing because it informs and shapes the humdrum. It provides a sense of intrinsic meaning or overall direction or deeper purpose. It originates not in daily activities but in ethics, spirituality or religion. It is not just a concern with the piecemeal constituents of a good life, but a love of the good itself and a search for that good in life (pp. 6-7).

So Vernon posits that there is an ethical volition which underpins our motivation toward fulfilment of our potential and drive for a pleasurable life. The idea that there is an internal volition that carries us toward a deeper purpose is a useful concept (and one I will explore at

length in Chapter Six), while stating that it precedes lower flourishing goes some way towards addressing the question of what comes first: inner wellbeing or virtuous activity.

Behavioural researcher Abraham Maslow also explored inner states of being in 1950.<sup>2</sup> Maslow was interested in trying to ascertain whether those who displayed peak levels of wellbeing had specific traits in common. Although some have argued that Maslow's research is invalid because it has not been replicated, I believe his research is worth mentioning here<sup>3</sup> as it was arguably among the first to stimulate the positive psychology movement of the 1990s (Vella-Brodrick 2011). It also has concordance with both philosophical deliberations about what flourishing consists in, and later positive psychological research.

Maslow coined the term 'self-actualizers' to denote those he believed had attained peak psychological health (1973). Maslow observed that his subjects had fourteen attributes which, although not outstanding as individual traits, were unusual in that so many were common to each of his subjects (1971, p. 41). While it may be argued that Maslow's list<sup>4</sup> is simply a list of personality traits, it is interesting that many can also be referred to as virtues.

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<sup>2</sup> Maslow undertook a study to investigate whether those who were measured as having the highest levels of mental wellbeing had particular traits in common. He reports that he was interested to know if they shared variances which differentiated them from others, with a view to compiling a list that would assist others to work toward gaining such traits. He states his studies were not initially undertaken with a specific replicable design, but for self-confessed private curiosity (Lowry 1973, p. 177).

<sup>3</sup> Maslow first sought to establish his subject's level of wellbeing via the use of psychological tests (in the case of deceased persons he established their level of wellbeing via interviews with relatives and former colleagues). He then examined their personalities and personal attributes, listing their traits and behaviours to find out if there were any common attributes.

<sup>4</sup> Maslow's self-actualizers' traits in greater detail:

- more efficient perception of reality and more comfortable relations with it;
- acceptance of self, others, and nature – 'As the child looks out upon the world with wide, uncritical, innocent eyes, simply noting and observing what is the case, without either arguing the matter or demanding that it be otherwise, so does the self-actualizing person look upon human nature in himself and in others' ;
- spontaneity – 'Their behaviour is marked by simplicity and naturalness, and by lack of artificiality or straining for effect ... these people have codes of ethics which are relatively autonomous and individual rather than conventional;
- problem-centering – 'Our subjects are strongly focused on problems outside of themselves ... problem-centered rather than ego-centered;
- quality of detachment & the need for privacy – 'It is true for almost all of them that they positively like solitude and privacy ... it is often possible for them to remain above the battle, to remain unruffled, undisturbed by that which produces turmoil in others.'
- autonomy, independence of culture and environment – 'they are propelled by growth-motivation rather than deficiency-motivation ... [and] can maintain a relative serenity and happiness in the midst of circumstances that would drive other people to suicide';

These traits appear to describe people who have a virtuous demeanour and who have a strong inner emotional stability, with an outward focus. They were also actively engaged in virtuous activities, and appeared to possess a sense of inner peace and happiness or contentment.

Barbara Fredrickson's (2009) has also undertaken research which tends to validate the kinds of traits self-actualizers displayed in Maslow's research. In *Positivity*, Fredrickson (2009) reports that her studies show that actively rehearsing the cultivation of certain qualities such as joy, gratitude, serenity, interest, hope, pride, amusement, inspiration, awe, and love, can positively change our inner mental states (p. 39). While not all will agree that everything on this list may be called a virtue, these qualities are arguably the kind of attitudinal states that tend to be involved in virtuous behaviour. While Plato, for instance, had a completely different list of virtues – being wise, courageous, moderate, and just (380BC/1992, pp. 103 427e-428a) – these virtues must be precipitated by the cultivation of other qualities of the type Fredrickson discusses. Fredrickson asserted that her research showed that practising these attitudes or qualities resulted in quantifiable positive effects such as a broadened mind, a greater ability to deal with adversity, a greater affinity with others, a feeling of

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- continued freshness of appreciation – [they] 'have the wonderful capacity to appreciate again and again, freshly and naively, the basic goods of life, with awe, pleasure, wonder, and even ecstasy, however stale these experiences may have come to others.';
  - mystic experience or oceanic feeling – '... the same feelings of limitless horizons opening up to the vision, of the feeling of being simultaneously more powerful and also more helpless than one ever was before, the feeling of great ecstasy and wonder and awe, the loss of placing in time and space with, finally, the conviction that something extremely important and valuable had happened ...';
  - gemeinschaftsgefühl - a German word which Maslow says is best described as 'a deep feeling of identification, sympathy, and affection' for others and 'because of this they have a genuine desire to help the human race';
  - interpersonal relations – [they] 'have a deeper and more profound interpersonal relations than any other adults ... capable of more fusion, greater love, more perfect identification, more obliteration of the ego boundaries than other people would consider possible';
  - democratic character structure – They can be, and are, friendly with anyone of suitable character, regardless of class, education, political belief, race, or color. As a matter of fact, it often seems as if they are not even aware of these differences';
  - means and ends – 'in general they are fixed on ends rather than on means, and means are quite definitely subordinated to these ends ... [although] they are likely to appreciate for its own sake ... the doing itself';
  - philosophical, unhostile sense of humor - '... they do not laugh at hostile humor (making people laugh by hurting someone) or superiority humor (laughing at someone else's inferiority) or authority-rebellion humor (the unfunny smutty joke) ... characteristically what they consider humor is more closely allied to philosophy than to anything else'; and
  - creativeness – 'Each one shows in one way or another a special kind of creativeness or originality or inventiveness ... being an expression of healthy personality, ... projected out upon the world or touches whatever activity the person is engaged in' (Maslow 1950/1973, pp. 181-196).

connecting with something larger, a greater level of creativity, while arguing that such people were more likely to help others on a number of levels (p. 73). Fredrickson (2009) reports that

One practical consequence of positivity's mind-broadening powers is enhanced creativity. A broad mind changes the way you think and act in a wide range of circumstances. When you see more, more ideas come to mind, more actions become possible (p. 59).

These findings support the Ancients' idea that virtue is an essential element of the skill base that is needed for people to flourish. They also correspond with the kinds of outwardly-focused activities in which Maslow's subjects engaged. It is the apparent way virtue works: turning our focus from ourselves to others appears to be supportive of a flourishing demeanour.

Fredrickson concludes that, with increased levels of positivity, not only do people feel better and have an expanded mind but that they 'become stronger, wiser, more resilient, and more socially integrated' (Fredrickson 2009, p. 226). She states finally that

People who flourish function at extraordinarily high levels – both psychologically and socially. They're not simply people who feel good. Flourishing goes beyond happiness, or satisfaction with life. ... they're also doing good – adding value to the world (p. 17).

What Fredrickson describes here is a person who displays great emotional wellbeing, a person whose life satisfaction includes actively doing good in the world. She says research shows that attaining this state in adulthood requires the constant daily practice of attention, meditation and letting go of negativity. Flourishing takes many years of devoted practice to achieve<sup>5</sup> when it is not already attained (p. 227). As I will show in the following chapter, however, the attributes we require to become flourishers are more readily acquired during the nurturing process.

If we develop a synthesis of ideas described above from both philosophers and the psychological research, it emerges that flourishing is indeed found, as the Ancients suggested, in a blend of virtuous activity, other focus and emotional wellbeing. What I argue

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<sup>5</sup> Fredrickson also suggests developing tool kits, connecting meaningfully with others every day, collecting items that represent positive things in your life, and constantly engaging in strategies which will enable you to change your operational way of being toward a more positive one. Changing our attention, she believes, takes time and often years of practice.

has become apparent in investigating the differing accounts from both sources, however, is the degree to which people who flourish are not only other focused, but also outwardly or communally focused in their lives. What has *not* become apparent, however, are the factors that precipitate the internal states that generate the virtuous antecedents needed to become flourishers. This is a topic I will cover in the following chapter.

Given that flourishing appears to be such a positive state to experience, I will next examine whether we have an obligation to enable flourishing in our children.

### **Obligations to Children**

If, as I have asserted above, flourishing is so valuable to human beings then we do have a moral obligation to cultivate this state in our children. While it is easy to make this statement, however, the level of commitment that is required to enable flourishing in our children may be more than parents should have to provide. It is therefore worth exploring the obligations of parents in regard to supplying the ultimate goods – the goods that will enable children to flourish. I will first look to what some philosophers believe our obligations are to our children, and outline the disagreements that exist between them which tend to centre on whether our obligations are to provide all that we can as parents, or only a minimal amount. I will argue that we have a duty to supply our children with optimal care, as this level of care is necessary if we are to provide them with the foundations from which they may flourish.

Parents would generally agree that they have a moral obligation to supply their children with adequate care, nourishment and warmth. Most parents in Australia, for instance, attend child care clinics and medical appointments to measure the growth and physical development of their children, taking advice to change or review their parenting practices according to medical and health care advice. Most monitor their children's food choices and intakes, and employ discipline where they believe it necessary. Others will pay for expensive private school education in the belief that this will benefit their children. It is not however easy to determine the limits to what parents ought to provide.

Archard (2010b) argues that parents have a responsibility to their children through the simple act of 'causing a child to exist' (p. 105). Archard calls this causal theory: that this is a



sufficient condition for parents to be under a parental obligation, carrying parental responsibilities with it (p. 105). Another reason we may accept the idea that parents have obligations is that children are unable to act unaided; they require the assistance of others. Archard (2003) states that, as 'a child cannot act independently to promote her own good, so an adult is warranted in acting on behalf of the child to promote her good' (p. 99). Blustein (1982) similarly argues that we have duties because children have inadequacies. He claims that 'the needs of children are natural needs in that they lack certain goods because of natural deficiencies, cognitive and emotional', and therefore these needs, he suggests, are 'deserving of consideration simply as such' (p. 116).

While it may be argued that *any* reasonable adult could undertake the care of a child requiring assistance as there is no agreed system where children are routinely accepted into any other generalised care arrangement, caring for children is usually viewed as the responsibility of the parents who bore them. While children do come into being through no actions of their own, Archard provides an argument which makes plausible the notion that parents can abdicate their responsibilities to their children, a notion that I will discuss later in this chapter.

Dependency, however, is reason enough for Blustein (1982) to argue that 'individuals who assume the role of parent have a moral duty to perform their institutional duties, because they have a duty to satisfy the needs of those who are dependent on them' (p. 116).

Without such care children they will fail to thrive or even to exist. Blustein (1982) believes it is necessary to analyse what parents are obliged to undertake in relation to their children, as sometimes they need to be reminded of their duties. Blustein (1982) says that

Parents do not always, or even usually, need to be reminded of their duties in order to be good parents, and children (at least young ones) do not usually measure their parents' actions according to some standard parental duty. Nevertheless, the natural affection that parents feel for their children, though prompting them in the right direction, is not always so strong that all the actions required of them come easily to them ... (p. 104).

Blustein suggests here that parents may need prompting or directing to engage in the right kind of behaviour toward their children. The fact that parents make all the decisions regarding their children's lives, Archard suggests, is reason enough to take the obligations toward their children seriously. And so Archard (2015b) advises that we have a 'duty to ensure that any child born has the reasonable prospect of enjoying a minimally decent life'

(p. 168). What shape this minimally decent life takes however is unclear. Archard (2015b) asks two key questions ‘How must the parent choose for his child?’ and ‘What is the scope and content of this perfect obligation a parent owes her child, and to which corresponds a child’s right?’ (p. 169). One place that Archard suggests looking to help clarify these question is the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UN CRC); however, while the UNICEF document has highlighted the need to place greater emphasis on the rights and wellbeing of children, Archard (2015b) suggests that on the whole it is not able to ‘settle the issue of what rights children should have – both morally and at law’ (p. 107). For instance, he says the child’s right to be loved is not covered by the document, but it is ‘guaranteed by the Declaration of the Rights of the Child in Israel (1979) and the Children’s Charter, Japan (1951)’ (Archard 2015b, p. 107).

While the UN CRC is widely accepted, there is one aspect of the document which Archard (2015b) finds ‘implausibly demanding’: that the best interests of the child will be the basic concern of parents or legal guardians (p. 169). Archard argues that this principle implies that ‘parents and the state shall do what in fact is the very best for each and every child’ (p. 169). Archard finds this overly demanding of parents; however, sounding somewhat relieved, Archard (2015b) also says it is ‘notable’ that the CRC makes ‘the best relative to what is attainable’ and to what is within the parents’ general abilities (p. 169). This point seems to be extremely important to Archard’s (2015b) conception of what parents owe their children. Children, he states,

... do not have a right to the best upbringing, nor even to the best possible upbringing. They do have a right that their parents shall do whatever they can to ensure the conditions of their development (pp. 169-170).

Archard appears to make a distinction between what equates to the best possible upbringing and doing whatever a parent can to ensure the conditions for children’s development. I feel that Archard’s distinction here is contradictory. To say that children ‘do have a right that their parents shall do whatever they can to ensure the conditions of their development’ *is* providing the best possible upbringing, I suggest. If we are to agree that the attributes of flourishers are usually linked to their development (for which I will provide more evidence in the following chapter), attributes such as our sociable nature, our altruistic thinking, and our virtuousness, then children will be offered the best development

opportunities and therefore receive the best possible parenting. The reason Archard (2015b) argues for the distinction is that he is concerned that:

... to require that parent shall do everything they possibly can to promote their child's development and welfare treats them as no more than altruistic paternalists, devoted agents of the good of their offspring' (p. 170).

Such an idea takes us to the heart of the conflict within this thesis. At what point are parents giving more of themselves than is necessary for them to give? Where is the critical point at which parents give so much to their children that they are essentially neglecting their own needs? Author Blustein is also concerned that parents may be called upon to give too much to their children's welfare, at their own expense. Blustein (2012) argues that promoting doing the best for one's child as the goal of parents is what he calls '*optimizing parentalism*'. He advocates what he describes as a 'less demanding view' which he calls '*satisficing parentalism*' (pp. 199-200). According to this view, 'parents do not have an obligation to do what is best, but what is good enough' (Blustein 2012, p. 200). Blustein (2012) says there are two reasons that 'optimizing parentalism is morally objectionable' (p. 200). First, he says that

... it makes excessive demands on parents by requiring them to always do the best or better for their child and to abandon commitments and projects that prevent them from doing this (Blustein 2012, p. 200).

Both Blustein and Archard appear to worry that parents may compromise their own lives in favour of their children's lives. While it is hard to imagine precisely what kind of requirements a child may have that would cause a parent to abandon commitments and projects, one may imagine that they may be referring to what money can buy - paying for private school education, for instance. In such a scenario it may be deemed that if parents want the very best for their child they would be required to pay for such education, possibly leaving both parents working long hours, and leaving little time for their own recreational needs. However, this would be to assume that the best development of the child involves a private school education. Another scenario may be that to optimise the child's development a parent needs to stay home full-time for a period of eighteen months to spend their time exclusively with their infant. The parent may indeed wish to return to work to earn money and to enjoy their chosen career. To ask that they postpone their return to the workplace for the sake of the child may well be viewed by Archard and Blustein as requiring too great a

sacrifice on the part of the parent. Essentially they appear to be of the view that satisfying children's needs is often oppositional to satisfying parental needs, a view I do not share. Indeed, I will posit that, when parents understand where happiness lies, their own interests complement those of their children – a notion that I will explain in detail in Chapter Five.

Second, Blustein expresses his concern that doing the best for their own child will prevent parents from focusing on the needs of other children. He argues

... that the idea of doing the best for one's child is a morally unattractive ideal because in a society such as ours, it can easily send the wrong message, namely, that parents who can should devote themselves to doing the best for their own child, rather than also to concern themselves with the needs of others, in particular, other children (p. 200).

There are two things to say about this aspect of Blustein's argument. In the first instance, I would suggest that, as we live in Western society that has its roots in liberalism which tends to valorise individualism and the private sphere, parents do not generally concern themselves with the needs of other children to any extent – to do so would be seen as interference in another family's wellbeing. Secondly, doing the best for one's child does not, I suggest, require parents to *devote* themselves to their children. To devote, or to give oneself "entirely" – a word Archard employs in his argument against providing the best care – is neither warranted nor healthy. As I shall detail in the following chapter, what supports the good development of children is loving care in relationship *with* one another, not giving and receiving in separation *from* one another, nor the slavish giving of the self that the word devotion suggests. While qualifying what constitutes 'best' is also fraught with problems, it does not in itself constitute devotion; rather, I suggest, it requires parents to contemplate how they can best support, nurture, and encourage their offspring toward wellbeing. Part of that is understanding that others have needs, including parents.

Just as fraught, however, is the definition of 'good enough' parenting. Blustein (2012) suggests it should be an upbringing that enables a child to at least reach a minimal level of independent competence for adult life in society (p. 201). Arguing that parents should be satisfied with their children having only minimal competence, however, is to argue that competence is relatively immaterial to a child's life path. As I have outlined and will become clearer in the following chapter, children's primary needs are met in the receipt of their parents' loving nurturance. This does not require devotion, or more than a minimal level of

financial support; it requires time, time to be responsive to the infant's needs, time to convey love, and time to develop a foundational relationship that will become their template for social, emotional and moral wellbeing. Without this time at the beginning of life, it is likely that the infant will not have the foundations they require to flourish.

Austin (2007), on the other hand, suggests that the wellbeing of children should be the present and future aim of parenthood. He suggests that the best way to 'capture the moral dimension of the parent-child relationship' is to think in terms of the concept of stewardship (p. 109). Austin (2007) posits that the word 'steward' provides a good descriptor of the kind of attitude we need to embody toward our children. A steward, Austin states, 'is someone who has been entrusted with something of great value that does not, strictly speaking, belong to the steward' (p. 7). Such an attitude is suggestive of a respected position, where the item, or in this case a small, vulnerable child, is treated with great care and high regard, as I have advocated we need to do above. There is a second reason, Austin (2007) asserts, for parents needing to approach their children with an attitude of stewardship:

... society has entrusted the raising of the child to them. Socially, we expect parents to raise their children, and to do at least an adequate job. The quality of child-rearing will have a deep impact on who a child will become, and who a child becomes impacts society as the child enters fully into that society (p. 111).

The idea that parents have a great influence over the kinds of people their children will become is not recent. Plato, for instance, mentions in the *Republic*, while discussing the internal workings of the parts of the soul, that we can accomplish internal harmony provided we have not 'been corrupted by a bad upbringing' (Plato 380BC/1992). Indeed, it has been obvious since Plato's time that parents can 'corrupt' their children by raising them badly, and it has been reason enough for states to have developed interventionist strategies for use when children are mistreated, at times leading to removal of children from their parents. And, I suggest, the reason they can be "corrupted" is because they are so vulnerable. Austin (2007) points out that

The vulnerability of children and the deep and lasting negative impacts on them as well as society that exist due to a failure of obligation in this area make such failures seriously wrong. Parents who abuse or neglect their children are failing as stewards of those children (p. 112).

However, I suggest we are failing as stewards of our children not only when we abuse or neglect them. We are failing as stewards when we do not provide children with the kind of development that will equip them with the tools that enable them to flourish. If it is believed that parents can deeply influence their children negatively, it follows that they can equally influence them positively. While Austin (2007) states that parents 'cannot guarantee well-being to their children, because so much that impacts the well-being of children and the adults they become is beyond parental control', he does argue that parents have a moral obligation 'to raise them in such a way that they have sufficient opportunity to experience significant well-being over the course of their lives' (p. 109). He adds that

Given the moral worth of children and the adults they become, we should aim for our children to experience well-being over the course of their lives. We should want them to flourish (p. 110).

Indeed I suggest we should not just want children to flourish, but we have a moral obligation to provide the conditions for them to flourish, to optimise parentalism, to use Blustein's expression. It is extremely unlikely that if, on the other hand, we accept satisficing parentalism – good enough parenting - that children will flourish. Therefore, Archard and Blustein's position on good enough parenting is to be rejected. Indeed, to submit to the lesser view is to not take seriously the undertaking of parenthood, nor to acknowledge the vulnerability of the child. Nor do I support the idea that the level of parental commitment which will enable children to flourish will result in opposition or conflict between the needs of children and their parents.

In part, parenting does require a change in attitude of parents, an attitude different from that held pre-children. As Alstott (2004) says, 'Parenthood brings new experiences but also new responsibilities: a parent is no longer quite the author of her own life' (p. 3). And while parenting does require taking responsibility – the level of responsibility that will enable children to gain the foundations for their later flourishing - it does not require devotion; rather, I suggest it involves adjustment. Parents need to adjust from the freedoms of their childless lives, to the responsibilities of a life where at least one tiny, defenceless other depends wholly on them for not only its survival but also its wellbeing. I will argue in Chapter Five that this does not have to compromise parental autonomy. Now I will discuss the characteristics of autonomy.

## **Autonomy**

When we speak of autonomy, we are arguably referring to a liberal ideal where the ultimate state of maturation is to have freedom and to be a self-sufficient, self-directed individual. Seeking to be an autonomous person, it could be argued, is to pursue obligations we believe we have to the self, where we actively pursue the things we believe will provide us with a better life. Once we have children, however, it is often difficult to know where the line is to be drawn between a parent's need for autonomy, and a child's needs, as they sometimes appear to conflict, as I have discussed above. I will examine what is generally meant by autonomy, and why it is believed to be fundamentally important to the individual. I will then discuss whether it is possible for parents to pursue their own autonomy at the same time as optimising the care they provide their children.

So, what are the duties or obligations we believe we have to ourselves? Generally speaking, such obligations are, from a Western liberalist perspective, to ensure we act as autonomous beings. There is no general consensus, however, as to what autonomy entails. Dworkin (2012), for instance, suggests that autonomy is generally found in 'the capacity of persons to stand back from their current ends and ideals, to question their value, and to attempt to change them if necessary' (p. 445). Dworkin holds what might be referred to as an introspective view which sees that a strong component of autonomy is self-examination. Archard (2015a) posits that autonomy has two kinds of capacities:

... one having to do with the ability of the individual to choose independently of others, and one having to do with the ability of the individual to choose in the light of what are genuinely her own desires and beliefs (p. 5)

According to these views of autonomy, the idea that people act, think, and make decisions about their lives independently of others is implicit; they act as independent agents. It can be argued that the emphasis placed on the individual's need to become the director of their own lives was largely a product of or a reaction to the lack of freedoms available to people prior to modernity and the Enlightenment (Archard 2015a, p. 5). Since then, it can be argued, autonomy has become a pillar of 'liberal orthodoxy' which holds that 'individuals should be permitted to make decisions concerning their own good and that a limitation of a person's freedom is never justified' (Archard 2015a, p. 6). Overall, as O'Neill (1992) states:

By and large, liberals and liberal political thinkers admire autonomy – whether they interpret it as independence, self-sufficiency or self-assertion or see it as (some form of) coherence or rationality within an agent's action (p. 203).

According to O'Neill and Archard's analysis, liberals view autonomy as a positive state of being. Archard contends that there are three possible ways in which autonomy may be expressed. First, he suggests that autonomy may be conceived of as 'a precondition for well-being' in that 'a non-autonomous life will always be worse than one led autonomously' (p. 5). Second, he says autonomy may be viewed as 'instrumentally valuable. Insofar as individuals choose autonomously they choose well and what is for their own good' (Archard 2015a, p. 5). The third view suggests autonomy is 'intrinsically valuable', as 'autonomy is a part of what makes life go well' (2015a, p. 5). I do not disagree with Archard's assessment of each view he presents. While this discussion of autonomy assumes that it is an essential thing to have in a liberal democracy, Dworkin states that there are now so many differing conceptions of autonomy that even the ideal of individual self-governance is no longer a given in the modern notion. Dworkin (2012) states that the way a person leads their life may have no particular ties to relationships 'which characterize morality'. As Dworkin also points out, just because someone is autonomous does not mean they cannot be an 'amoral or an immoral person' (2012, p. 450). This view vastly differs from Kant's (1785) conception of autonomy. His idea of autonomy was invariably equated with being rational, and being rational was to be moral. Kant states that

Autonomy of the will is the property the will has of being a law to itself ... Hence the principle of autonomy is 'Never to choose except in such a way that in the same volition the maxims of your choice are also present as universal law (p. 120).

Being rational, and hence moral, appears to be a less significant element in contemporary conceptions of autonomy however. Nonetheless, I suggest, the idea that people should be free to be self-directed individuals is generated by the belief that autonomous beings are rational and will therefore choose well for themselves. Ramsay (2004) argues that

If an individual acts because of impulse, obsessions or compulsions; through domination of lower-order desires or weakness of will or if their beliefs are the result of ignorance, misunderstanding or the failure of critical rationality, then they are not acting autonomously. That individual is in insufficient control over their life to be called autonomous, to be said to be ruling themselves (p. 58)



This is an important issue that Ramsay raises. While it may be argued that such people are not autonomous, as they lack clear rational judgement, I suggest that such people will usually believe they are being rational. If this is the case, then judgements about what constitutes rational behaviour is a subjective matter. People's emotional undercurrents vary greatly, possibly causing them to make decisions to act in ways that others may deem irrational. Ramsay (2004) rightly points out that people may also be influenced, unknowingly, by social mores and expectations which ultimately compromise their autonomy. She says that the view

... of the isolated, abstract individual ignores the social, economic, political, patriarchal, cultural and commercial forces which influence the individual's perceptions of their interests. This means that expressed preferences are not autonomously chosen, nor do they necessarily reflect their real interests, in the way liberal theory supposes (p. 59).

This view challenges the idea that we are making rational decisions for ourselves, as we may be unduly influenced by social *morés*. Understanding that a myriad of influences are actually behind many of the choices we make is crucial. Generally, however, we do not assume the autonomy of an agent on the grounds that they are rational people; we generally simply look to that person's capacity to take responsibility and to direct their own lives, and assume therefore that they are autonomous.

What is not discussed by any of the authors in regard to autonomy, however, is whether the pursuit of autonomy can foster a flourishing state. There are two things to say about this. First, it could be argued that this signifies that flourishing is not linked with the things that are generally associated with autonomy: independence and self-sufficiency. Given that autonomy *is* associated with maturation, this appears to be problematic. As I have detailed earlier in this chapter, those who have investigated what it means to flourish generally associate maturation with having an ability to flourish. One would assume therefore that if being autonomous signals maturation then flourishing should be something which is associated with it. Second, the failure of liberalism to link flourishing with autonomy calls into question the association of autonomy with maturation. Communitarians and some feminist writers have also made similar points. They have, broadly speaking, put forward the idea that maturation ought to be signalled by the ability to see oneself as an *interdependent* rather than an independent being – a topic I will explore at length in Chapter Five.

If we view autonomy in a liberalist framework, however, parents are individual adults and therefore ought to be able to act as autonomous individuals. Parents very often undertake paid work of their choosing, live in places of their choosing, and choose the kinds of activities they undertake. Indeed, they may choose to have children. The nature of parenting however, and the vulnerability and need for care of children, particularly during the period of a child's infancy, often does require parents to modify their priorities, previously associated with their autonomy. Blustein (2012) sees such a role as exacting. He states that

Parenthood is an extraordinarily demanding undertaking if it is done even moderately well, and for many individuals and couples, it fundamentally changes their practical identity, contouring and constraining whatever other particular identities they may have acquired (p. 202).

While, as Alstott above says, such changes should be expected as part of being a parent, Blustein's view is that new demands on parents often result in unfair restrictions on them, causing them to fail to pursue the obligations they have to themselves, whereas Austin's (2007) view is that parenting involves placing greater priority on children's needs. He states that

Parents as stewards tend not to focus on asserting their rights in the parent-child relationship, but rather they generally place a higher priority on the interests of the children in their care (p. 111).

Placing priority on the care of our children in Austin's account implies that this is not an error on the parent's part but a deliberate choice. Archard (2015b) himself points out that

... parents share their life with their children, and in conditions of considerable intimacy and emotional closeness. Families live, eat, play, holiday, travel, entertain themselves and worship together (p. 199).

Given this level of intimacy and, in a sense, inseparability of children and parents' lives, I suggest it is normal to make adjustments to accommodate the needs of children. However, Archard and Blustein believe that such adjustments may compromise parental autonomy, and are therefore misguided. A pathway which enables parents to circumvent this problem is formal childcare. Babies are often booked into childcare as soon as they are conceived, and are accepted into childcare centres as young as six weeks of age. Some argue that in order for women to maintain their autonomy they must be enabled through the use of

childcare to be unencumbered by their child's needs, at least for the period of the day that they are earning.

Archard (2010b) offers an argument which can be used to justify the utilisation of childcare. He says there are two ways we might conceive of the duties of parenthood. Archard (2010b) states that there is 'an obligation to ensure *that* someone acts as a parent to the child, and there are the responsibilities of *acting as a parent*' (p. 104). The reason Archard brings our awareness to these differing aspects of parental obligation is because he maintains that parents can discharge their parental obligation by 'making provision for others to care for the child' (p. 104). That is, he argues, while parental obligation is discharged by one, it is accepted and undertaken by another (2010b, p. 104). While Archard presents this argument with a view to uncoupling parents from their parental responsibility, his principle claim 'is that if someone does incur a parental obligation to make provision for a child they have caused to exist then he or she is not under a duty to provide that care themselves' (p. 114). Archard puts forward this argument to protect parents from the obligation to parent when they may not be fit to parent, or may choose not to parent a child. However, this argument can equally be applied to parents who wish to have others care for their children in their daily absences. As long as they believed their children were no worse off in the care of others during their working hours than if they were cared for by their natural parents, then parents would be justified in placing their children in child care, thus maintaining their own autonomy.

Given our conclusion that children ought to receive the kind of care from their parents which will result in their optimal development, however, we need to question whether childcare centres can provide optimal nurturance to infants – a topic that I will examine in Chapter Two. I have argued that parents ought to provide the kind of conditions that enable their children to flourish, yet at the same time we have established that parents also ought to be able to strive for the maintenance of their own autonomy. If we are to reject placing infants into childcare, this will arguably leave parental autonomy compromised.

## **Conclusion**

In this chapter I explored the concept of flourishing, and discussed why it was important to this project. I asserted that, despite the long historical interest in flourishing, it is still

something that remains rather elusive - yet is something we want for ourselves and our children. I explored the attributes associated with flourishing, or attributes that may be signs of attaining a flourishing state, by exploring a number of philosophers' ideas and psychological research data. I argued that a synthesis of their ideas showed that flourishing consists in having quite specific attributes, such as being virtuous, being other focused, and having high level emotional and social wellbeing. However, I posited that knowing the attributes one needs to possess in order to become a flourishing individual does not by itself enable people to gain such attributes. I argued that people may work toward gaining such attributes for many years yet still not attain them. I claimed that the most straightforward way of gaining the attributes needed to become a flourishing individual was to be found in the kind of nurturing that is delivered by a consistent, loving, responsive and enduring attachment figure (the evidence for which will be detailed in the following chapter).

Indeed, I argued that flourishing is so valuable to human beings that it is something we have a moral obligation to provide to our children. I stated that while there is consensus on the need to provide well for our children, authors such as Archard (2015b) and Blustein (2012) argue that we are only obligated to supply an *adequate* level of parenting, what Blustein terms satisficing parentalism. I nevertheless agreed with Austin's view that parents ought to provide to the *best* of their ability, arguing that without such care children may not be afforded the conditions in which they can flourish. Something parents, I argued, have a moral obligation to provide.

I discussed how Archard (2015b) and Blustein's (2012) reasoning for advocating the lesser model of parenting was precipitated by their concern for parental autonomy. Both, I asserted, worry that a parent's own life may be compromised unfairly if indeed they were to provide optimal parental care for their children. I investigated the nature of autonomy, positing that it is generally accepted to be found in self-directed independence and self-sufficiency. I also considered whether autonomy could be viewed as being the kind of thing that adults had an obligation to provide themselves.

Finally, I asserted that the pursuit of autonomy as it is conceived in liberalist societies was incompatible with the equal pursuit of providing the kind of goods to children that will enable them to have the foundations on which to flourish. The relatively recent societal solution, the provision of childcare, where others are paid to care for our infants, may not

provide the environment where infants can experience the foundations for flourishing. And so the tension remains - a tension which will be the subject of the remaining chapters of this thesis.

## ***Chapter 2 - Empirical Evidence***

In the previous chapter I described a tension that exists between the moral obligations we have to our children and our need to be autonomous individuals. I also made a claim that parents have a moral obligation to provide children with the conditions that will enable them to flourish, yet I also stated that these ideal conditions may be compromised by placing children into childcare during infancy. In this chapter I will supply the empirical evidence which supports these claims, explaining precisely what it is that infants require from their parents in order to develop the foundations which will support them to flourish. I will first investigate attachment theory which hypothesises that bonding positively with a loved attachment figure provides the infant with a sense of security. I will argue that such bonding is extremely important to an infant's later wellbeing. I will then present the neuroscientific evidence that has both advanced and extended attachment theory. This will show that what is taking place in an infant's brain is far more complex and experience dependent, with much longer term outcomes, than we have previously realised.

I will suggest that we must pay attention to what the science tells us because to ignore this data may result in parenting practices persisting that fail to effectively accommodate the needs of our infants, and, as a consequence, to negatively affect their mental, emotional, and moral wellbeing. While it is often advised that the young be taught the virtues so they can become good ethical individuals, I will argue that moral, social, and emotional behaviour is developed at a much earlier age than previously realised through the repeated patterns of interactions with a loved and trusted other during infancy.

I will also argue that the empirical evidence reveals reasonably precise information about two important goods. First, it can tell us what kind of care infants require in order to lay down the most beneficial neuronal networks for their brain functioning and development. I will argue that this knowledge can assist us to modify our behaviour as parents. Second, the science confirms that the attributes believed to be prerequisite characteristics for eventually becoming flourishing individuals are indeed those discussed in Chapter One.

The science I will present, however, also provides evidence which establishes that mothers are the preferred candidate to undertake the preponderance of the nurturing of their infants for a period of time. This is a controversial claim, but I will show in this chapter that the empirical evidence for it is strong. Indeed, I will make a normative claim that the state ought to ensure that mothers undertake the primary full-time caring role of their infants for at least the first eighteen months of life, and thereafter the role can be assumed by an attachment figure until the children reach the age of three.

The evidence also suggests that many parents do not know how to nurture effectively, a reality measured by the number of infants who have insecure attachment. A sense of insecurity has been shown to lead to many negative long-term outcomes for children. I will argue in Chapter Six that this is principally due to the intergenerational inability to convey love effectively. The antidote, I will argue, is to provide parents with appropriate knowledge tools to assist them to understand how to nurture effectively, and subsequently how to pass on these positive nurturing techniques to their infants. I will posit that parents will require a range of supports to both acquire and to deliver this knowledge to their infants. This will inform the basis of the second normative claim I will make: that parents ought to receive an appropriate education, as well as the necessary financial and socio-emotional supports, in order to provide the best care to their infants. Alas, these normative claims conflict with some strands of thought within two theories that we generally live by: liberalism and feminist theory – issues which I will address at length in Chapters Three and Four. There will be policy implications which flow from these normative claims which I will address in Chapter Seven.

## **Attachment Theory**

Attachment theorists and neuroscientists have been making claims about infants' emotional wellbeing for some time. In this section I will provide some historical background to attachment theory which was first propounded in the 1950s. I will argue that enquiring about what was most natural to human beings triggered the development of attachment theory, a theory that has assisted us in understanding why certain nuances found in nurturing styles can make a profound difference to an infant's later behavioural outcomes. I will argue that an understanding of attachment theory can help us understand why infancy

is the most vulnerable and critical stage of life, and why it is so essential that infants be protected and nourished. I will also discuss two sources of opposition to the theory.

Psychotherapist John Bowlby argued that finding what was most natural to us was fundamental to working out what primes human behaviour. The idea that we need to look at what is natural to human beings in order to ascertain what is most authentic to us, and thus what might make us happy, has long been investigated by philosophers, the Stoics (Miller 2010) and Kant (Kant 1785) being two examples. Bowlby hoped such an investigation would also enable us to understand what precipitated the pathologies of behaviour that he witnessed while investigating the mental health of homeless children. He also looked outside his field to ethology, proposing that bonding had a lot to do with their safety and protection (p. 27). Bowlby (1988) says this led him to link the absence of a warm, intimate, and continuous relationship in infancy with an absence of safety and protection, which he believed resulted in deficits in mental wellbeing (p. 21). Bowlby came to call the human need to seek safety and protection attachment behaviour. He described it as:

... any form of behaviour that results in a person attaining or maintaining proximity to some other clearly identified individual who is conceived as better able to cope with the world. It is most obvious whenever the person is frightened, fatigued, or sick, and is assuaged by comforting and caregiving. At other times the behaviour is less in evidence (Bowlby 1988, pp. 26-27).

The idea that the primary attachment figure represents a safe environment for the infant became the principle idea behind attachment theory. Bowlby believed that a safe environment was vital to the development of a child's inner sense of wellbeing. Bowlby said data showed that 'so long as the child is in the unchallenged presence of a principal attachment-figure, or within easy reach, he feels secure. A threat of loss creates anxiety' (Bowlby 1969, p. 209).

Bowlby and his colleague Mary Ainsworth found that not all infants displayed what they had come to believe was a sense of security when in the presence of their parent. While undertaking long-term behavioural studies of mothers and their babies first in Africa and later in the UK, Ainsworth says her 'first longitudinal study was undertaken with 28 infants and their mothers in semi acculturated villages near Kampala, Uganda' (1985, p. 774). It was during this study that she says she formulated the idea that there were 'several phases of the development of attachment' (p. 774). Ainsworth (1985) states that



The second study was begun nearly 10 years later with a sample of 26 mother-infant dyads in white, middle-class families in Baltimore – obviously differing from the Ganda sample culturally and racially. The attachment behaviors previously identified were essentially identical in the Baltimore sample, and so were the phases of development (p. 774).

Ainsworth found that differences in the style of maternal nurturing produced differences in the way infants reacted to stimuli, resulting in differences in security. To test which kind of attachment infants had developed, Ainsworth created an experiment she called the Infant Stranger Situation (ISS) (Ainsworth et al. 1978). The experiment was devised to place the infant under stress and to trigger their attachment schema, which could then be observed. This was achieved by having the mother leave her happily playing infant in a room alone, introducing a stranger, and then reuniting the infant with its mother. Siegel (1999) explains the thinking behind Ainsworth's ISS:

The idea is that an infant who has developed an internal working model of secure attachment will be able to use the parent to soothe himself quickly and return to his childhood task of exploration and play. If the infant has an insecure attachment model, then the return of the parent will not facilitate such an emotional regulatory function or allow the child to use the parent to return to playing (p. 73).

While the securely attached infants displayed marked distress at being left alone during the ISS, on the return of their mother and being once again in close proximity to her they were quickly soothed and readily resumed exploring again (Ainsworth 1979, p. 778). It was the reconnection with the attachment figure that was identified as the most important part of this cycle, enabling self-soothing and the infant to gradually become confident that repair is attainable. However, infants who had not been soothed by the mother's return were identified as infants whose mother had been generally unresponsive<sup>6</sup> to them during their first year of life. In contrast to babies with secure attachment, Ainsworth observed that

... babies whose mothers have disregarded their signals, or have responded to them belatedly or in a grossly inappropriate fashion, have no basis for believing the mother to be accessible and responsive; consequently they are anxious, not knowing what to expect of her (1979, p. 933).

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<sup>6</sup> Contrary to many Western theories at the time, Ainsworth found parental responsiveness was a key aspect of secure attachment. Ainsworth (1985) states:

A mother's prompt responsiveness to infant crying early on led an infant to cry less in later months rather than reinforcing a tendency to cry. Giving the baby close bodily contact when he signalled for it was associated both with secure attachment and the growth of self-reliance rather than making for a clingy dependence. Sensitive responsiveness to infant signals fostered cooperative compliance with commands, whereas emphasis on training the child to obey fostered noncompliance (p. 775).

Ainsworth was able to show that the unpredictability of some mother's responsiveness caused infants to develop insecure attachment and anxiety. While infants may survive and even physically appear to thrive, Ainsworth was able to show that, underneath this exterior, some infants experienced high levels of anxiety and lacked a sense of security.

Several insecure attachment styles were identified by Ainsworth and later by Mary Main. Each corresponded with differing nurturing styles and matched specific mental health and behavioural outcomes (Main 2000). I will not detail them here as I feel it is sufficient for the purposes of this thesis to refer to the differing insecure styles under the one umbrella: insecure. What is of importance, however, is that Ainsworth's and Main's studies were able to show that insecure styles of attachment were found to lead to lowered levels of emotional wellbeing, with resultant adverse behaviours. On the other hand, Ainsworth (1979) described attributes which were apparent in securely attached infants:

In comparison with anxiously attached infants [insecure], those who are securely attached as 1-year-olds are later more cooperative with and affectively more positive as well as less aggressive and/or avoidant toward their mothers and other less familiar adults. Later on, they emerge as more competent and more sympathetic in interaction with peers. In free-play situations they have longer bouts of exploration and display more intense exploratory interest, and in problem solving situations they are more enthusiastic, more persistent, and better able to elicit and accept their mothers' help. They are more curious, more self-directed, more ego-resilient – and they usually tend to achieve better scores on both developmental tests and measures of language development (Ainsworth 1979, p. 936).

These positive attributes, including high levels of self-esteem, confidence and social competence (Ainsworth 1985; Bowlby 1969; Howe 2005), were attributes also associated with those of flourishers, as I discussed in Chapter One. Bowlby (1988) found that social competence was being developed from a very young age. He states that

When a mother and her infant of two or three weeks are facing one another, phases of lively social interaction occur, alternating with phases of disengagement. Each phase of interaction begins with initiation and mutual greeting, builds up to an animated interchange comprising facial expressions and vocalisation, during which the infant orients towards his mother with excited movements of arms and legs; then his activities gradually subside and end with the baby looking away for a spell before the next phase of interaction begins (p. 7).

These observations were able to show that long before language is being established the infant is learning through cyclical interactions (with the mother in this case) - of engagement

and disengagement. In these interactions the infant begins to learn the characteristics of social interaction. When our social experiences have developed in the company of a responsive, loving other, respectful overtones are a natural part of the turn-taking rhythmical communication, which I suggest carries empathy in its patterning. Certainly, such an idea is supported by observations showing that 'Children whose mothers respond sensitively to their signals and provide comforting bodily contact are those who respond most readily and appropriately to the distress of others' (Bowlby 1988, p. 15). While Plato, and many since, have advocated that the young ought to be schooled in the virtues in order that they become good, ethical individuals, it now seems that such learning is absorbed much earlier via the repeated pattern of interactions with a loved and trusted other during infancy.

While some may rightly claim that flourishing can be achieved later in life by utilizing psychological practices or techniques to marginalize unhelpful thinking and to enhance helpful mind patterning (as discussed in Chapter One), I nevertheless contend that developing the inner resources to become a flourishing individual is more efficiently achieved during infancy, as attaining it in adult years is difficult, and, for some, impossible.

Though I have cited Bowlby's research at length, it must be pointed out that he has not been without his critics. Margaret Mead (1962) for instance was highly critical of what she called Bowlby's argument for exclusivity of the mother-infant relationship. She said his assumption is that

... there is a biologically given need for continuity in this mother-child relationship, that it is a pair relationship which cannot be safely distributed among several figures, and that all attempts to diffuse or divide it and all interruptions are necessarily harmful in character, emotionally damaging, if not completely lethal (p. 55).

Mead's view, that Bowlby stipulated that the attachment relationship should be exclusive to all others, and without support, is not accurate. Bowlby answered such criticism in his book, *A Secure Base* (1988):

I want also to emphasize that despite voices to the contrary, looking after babies and young children is no job for a single person. If the job is to be well done and the child's principal caregiver is not to be too exhausted, the caregiver herself (or himself) needs a great deal of assistance. From whom that help comes will vary: very often it is the other parent; in many societies, including more often than is realized our own,

it comes from a grandmother. Others to be drawn in to help are adolescent girls and young women. ... Paradoxically it has taken the world's richest societies to ignore these basic facts (p. 2).

So while Bowlby does advocate the need for a primary attachment figure, he does not envisage that this is a solo endeavour; rather, Bowlby advocates that there should always be support for the primary attachment figure, in order that they may have the resources to deliver the care their infant needs.

Anthropologist Sarah Blaffer Hrdy (2009) also criticised Bowlby's theory for similar reasons to Mead, stating that she wanted '*to correct an underlying assumption about universality of exclusive maternal care*' (authors emphasis) (p. 82). Hrdy (2009) argues that 'there is nothing evolutionarily out of the ordinary about mothers cutting corners or relying on shared care' (p. 85). Hrdy states that 'alloparents' - persons who provided the 'care and provisioning of young by group members other than parents' - were usually available to mothers of the groups she studied (p. 22). Hrdy (2009) cites the way the Efe tribe pass around new babies, stating that 'Efe babies average 14 different caretakers in the first days of life' (p. 79). It could be argued that this is not unlike Western parents. Typically, after a baby is born in the West, visitors arrive to view the new baby and most ask if they can hold the baby for a time. Most parents readily allow others to hold and introduce themselves to the new infant.

While some may argue that Hrdy's discussion of alloparents negates the idea of having a primary attachment figure, there are several reasons I suggest that this is not the case. First, even though babies in the communities to which Hrdy refers may spend more time with others than infants in the West, generally these others are those living in extended families with the infant, and thus may also constitute attachment figures – that is, familiar others with whom the infant is in constant contact, and who also provide a sense of security to the infant. Second, although the infant may spend time with others, the mother is usually the principal figure who breastfeeds the infant, into the fourth year of life in some societies (Hrdy 2009, p. 283). Maintaining a breast milk supply requires frequent feeding of the infant, particularly prior to the introduction of solid food; therefore the younger the infant the more time the infant must actually spend with their own mother, who is, because of the frequency of contact in most cases, likely to be their primary attachment figure.

Fraley and Spieker (2003) also criticise attachment theory insofar as they believe that infants do not neatly fit into the three main categories that have been widely accepted. They suggest that 'The results indicate that variation in attachment patterns is largely continuous' rather than categorical (Fraley & Spieker 2003, p. 387). They argue for some adjustments to the measures used in the assessment of attachment status, which they believe will improve the validity of attachment scores. However, Fraley and Spieker (2003) still believe that attachment theory itself has validity, stating that 'With improved and more appropriate measurement models in hand, we believe that the study of attachment will continue to thrive in the years to come' (p. 403).

Attachment theory has also been evaluated for its cross cultural validity. Cassidy and Shaver (2010) collated and analysed a number of cross-cultural studies (China, Africa, Japan, Indonesia, and Israel) which attempted to evaluate attachment theory. They stated that, 'Even in a childrearing environment in which mothers share their caregiving responsibilities with several other adults and older children, infants nevertheless become attached to their mothers and use them as a secure base to explore the world' (p. 2765). On conclusion of the discussion of the cross-cultural studies Cassidy and Shaver (2010) stated that although the number of countries that had data on attachment data were small that '... taken as a whole, the studies are remarkably consistent with the theory. Attachment theory may therefore claim cross-cultural validity' (p. 2817). Nonetheless, Western families and cultures are my central concern in this thesis. I will now examine the neuroscientific evidence that supports attachment theory.

## **Neuroscientific Evidence**

Although attachment theory is not universally accepted, recent advances in infant neuroscience largely support the ideas behind it. I will examine some of the research that has been undertaken since the 1980s which provides greater detail about the mechanisms that underpin attachment theory, and, as neuroscientists explain, expands the theory into one of emotional regulation. I will argue that the statistical data, together with other research I will present, shows that the foundations of mental wellbeing are formed in the first twelve to twenty-four months of life, in accordance with Bowlby's assertion. I will discuss the data which shows which aspects of nurturing enable us to communicate a sense

of security to the infant. It is this detail, I argue, that needs to be conveyed to parents so that they understand which nurturing techniques will ensure their infants develop the attributes they require to flourish.

Before examining the deeper nuances of infant/parent relations, I will provide some statistical data about the infant brain. While these statistics may mean little on their own, when coupled with other research they support attachment theory's claim that the environment in which infants develop has long-term implications for the future wellbeing of the infant. Neuroscientists Knickmeyer et al (2008), for instance, report that the brain grows by over 101% in the first year of life, compared to just 15% in the second, the cerebellum itself growing by 240% in the first year (p. 12178). They also state that we have 80-90% of total adult brain volume by the age of two (p. 12176). Rapid increases in brain size alone cannot tell us exactly what processes are forming<sup>7</sup>; however, Knickmeyer et al (2008) speculate that this large amount of cerebellar growth may underpin the rapid motor development of infancy, as well as development of cognitive abilities, including planning, language, abstract reasoning, visual-spatial organization, and memory (p. 12180). Knickmeyer et al (2008) suggest that the rapid growth of the brain predisposes infants to be vulnerable to both positive and negative stimulation. They state that

The large increase in total brain volume in the first year of life suggests that this is a critical period in which disruption of developmental processes, as the result of innate genetic abnormalities or as a consequence of environmental insults, may have long-lasting or permanent effects on brain structure and function (p. 12179).

This unprecedented brain growth highlights the probability that environmental impacts can influence infants' neural development. Certainly evidence appears to show that what takes place in the first year of life does create long-term foundational patterning. Waters et al (2000) measured attachment status at 12 months of age and tested for attachment status

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<sup>7</sup> Knickmeyer et al state that although MRI's are not currently capable of identifying the neurodevelopmental processes which underlie observed volume growth during infancy, that 'postmortem human and nonhuman primate studies reveal likely candidates' he says that it is 'likely that the gray matter volume increase reflects changes in neuropil, which is composed of dendrites, axons, and glia' (p. 12180). Knickmeyer et al conclude:

... we observed rapid growth of the entire brain during the first year of life, with slower growth during the second year of life. Compared with the cortical hemispheres, the cerebellum showed disproportionate enlargement in this period. Within the cortical hemispheres, gray matter volume increased significantly more than white matter volume and the proportion of gray to white matter changed markedly. Unique growth patterns were also observed in the ventricles, caudate, and hippocampus. These findings can provide insight into pathologies of development such as autism and schizophrenia and may ultimately allow us to define structural correlates of critical periods in human cognitive development (p. 12181).

again at 20 years of age. The results showed a 72% correlation between the tests, despite the passage of 19 further years of development (Waters et al. 2000, p. 686). While the study could not conclusively show that the durability of attachment was due to the parenting infants had received up until one year of age, as the effect may have been cumulative over the whole of their childhoods, the fact that attachment status is measureable at one year, and has robust correlations with measures taken at 20 years, shows that attachment status has already become strongly measureable at one year of age. The stability of early patterning is further supported by studies undertaken by Mary Main. She was able to show that parents' own attachment schema, measured prior to the birth of their infant, were able to predict, with 75% accuracy, the attachment schema their infant would develop (Main 2000, p. 1091). Main's findings point to three things. First, that the type of interactive style the parent is likely to have with its new infant is highly predictable when based on the parent's own attachment status. Second, that the parent's attachment style is readily measureable in the infant's attachment status. The third of Main's findings indicates how readily attachment schemas become part of our familial intergenerational patterning. While it may be argued that this could be a function of genetics, there is increasing agreement suggesting that whether genes are expressed or not depends on the influence of 'epigenetics, developmental plasticity, basic needs, the microbiome, and local and macro ecological heritages' (Narvaez 2014, p. 37). So, even a genetic predisposition for attachment may require the appropriate upbringing.

Arguing for intergenerational patterning seems to imply that parenting is a matter of giving in one direction; however, Narvaez (2013b) says that infants are experience expectant, displaying seeking and interactive behaviours that she believes are helpful in eliciting nurturance from their carers (p. 15). A study conducted on human infants in the first 3 to 96 hours of life found that neonates had an already existing imitative system (Schorer 2009, p. 8). Trevarthen's (2011) research into neonatal responsiveness led him to state that

As thinking adults depend upon years of practical experience, reasoning about facts and causes, and language to sustain their knowledge, beliefs and memories, and to understand one another, it seems quite absurd to suggest that a newborn infant has intersubjective mental capacities. But detailed research on how neonatal selves coordinate the rhythms of their movements and senses, and how they engage in intimate and seductive precision with other person's movements, sensing their purposes and feelings, gives evidence that it is so (p. 119).

This kind of research debunks the idea that babies simply need a person to care for them; rather, they seek interaction. It seems infants are also sensing others' purposes and feelings and trying to elicit interaction with them. This happens at the same time the birth parent's body is flooded with neurochemicals to facilitate her bonding with her infant (Feldman et al. 2007, p. 969). This combination of systems is believed to ignite the intimate interaction and developing relationship that generally ensures bonding between the mother and her infant. Often referred to as the dyad, their relationship consists of intimate interactions and neural practising. As described by Bowlby above, these are believed to form a subconscious working model of interactive style, 'built up over thousands of interactions' (Steele 2013, p. 423). Schore (1994) explains how this works:

In sustained mutual gaze transactions, the mother's facial expression stimulates and amplifies positive affect in the infant. The child's internally pleasurable state is communicated back to the mother, and in this interactive system of reciprocal stimulation both members of the dyad enter into a symbiotic state of heightened positive affect (p.71).

This to-and-fro type of pre-verbal interaction between infant and adult is characterised by the mimicking of each other's facial expressions, helping the infant to learn the various cues associated with the expression of emotions, while also helping convey how the mother feels about the infant (Siegel 2009, pp. 59-60). This is thought to be one of the most critical elements involved in attachment theory. How the infant perceives its attachment figure feels about them either engenders a sense of inner wellbeing or inner distress. It is the infant's inner perception of whether they 'feel felt' or do not, as Siegel describes it, that comes to determine whether the infant is emotionally nourished or not (2001, p. 78). It is this idea that has moved attachment theory from one which focuses on the attachment relationship to one that is more heavily focused on how this relationship enables the infant to feel emotionally. Siegel (2001) explains:

Relationships that are "connecting" and allow for collaboration appear to offer children a wealth of interpersonal closeness that supports the development of many domains, including social, emotional, and cognitive functioning. Such collaboration may be essential in the creation of a coherent core and autobiographical sense of self (p. 78).

It is this self, the self that is learning to connect with others, learning to read and express emotions, while developing cognitive functioning, that is important to my assertion of this



being a critical age at which we develop the tools for our future wellbeing. Siegel (2012a) calls the process of learning to regulate and modify emotions as ‘emotional regulation’ or ‘the general ability of the mind to alter the various components of emotional processing’ (p. 273).

Good early neural patterning then, which includes developing an ability to ‘modify the flow of arousal’, is key to ‘how we experience the world, relate to others, and find meaning in life’ (Siegel 2012a, p. 273). As Siegel (2012a) points out:

Emotion reflects the fundamental way in which the mind assigns value to external and internal events and then directs the allocation of attentional resources to further the processing of these representations. ... With this perspective, emotional regulation can be seen at the center of the self-organization of the mind (p. 273).

The way the person assigns value is therefore critical to the way we negotiate our world emotionally, and is key to how we interact with our environment. This system also influences our moral propensities. Narvaez states that ‘our moral inheritance of communal imagination’, gained when we are immersed in ‘a supportive social environment in early life and beyond’, ensures that our emotions and ‘sensibilities coordinate with cognition and motivation’ (Narvaez 2014, p. 9). She says that

... like everything human, morality emerges from biology and embodiment – our lived experience. It is insufficient to discuss human social and moral functioning only as psychological phenomena ... Physical and mental health, morality, and flourishing are integrated (Narvaez 2014, p. 11).

This interrelationship of the various aspects of the mind is often not understood by philosophers. Kant, for example, vehemently advocated that persons had to put to one side their emotions in order to gain access to morality (1785, p. 70/339), but modern neuroscience has been able to show this is far from possible.

If, as I have argued, our social, emotional, and moral wellbeing are intimately intertwined, and are prerequisite dispositions for flourishing, then the need for parents to provide the right kind of nurturing to their infants is reinforced. This requires that parents provide repeated, heartfelt displays of body language, verbal tone, eye contact, and tactile embraces toward their infants (Narvaez & Gleason 2013; Schore 1994, 2013). These elements are the aspects of parenting that are critical to the transmission to the infant of feeling felt, or feeling understood, and to feeling a sense of security. While these elements

may seem straightforward, they are not always aspects of parenting that infants receive in sufficient quantities to ensure that their development enables them to flourish.

A recent UK paper, commissioned by the Sutton Trust, which undertook a literature review 'to identify clearly the fundamental role of the parent not only as the first teacher but as the first caregiver and provider of love and security', found that 40% of children had insecure attachment (Moullin, Waldfogel & Washbrook 2014, p. 3). Siegel (1999) reports that 'in low-risk, non-clinical populations, security of attachment to mothers is found in about fifty-five to sixty-five percent of infants' (p. 76). These figures were taken from a meta-analytical study conducted by van Ijzendoorn and Bakermans-Kranenburg which analysed 33 studies and more than 2,000 participants. The study found that in clinical populations the rates of secure attachment could be as low as eight percent, whereas in low socioeconomic groups 39 percent had security of attachment (1996, p. 15). Another longitudinal study conducted by the US Department of Education and called 'The Early Childhood Longitudinal Study, Birth Cohort (ECLS-B)' was a multisource, multimethod study that focused on the early home and educational experiences of 10,700 young children (Andreassen & Fletcher 2007, pp. 1-2) (p.1-2). The study followed a 'nationally representative cohort of children born in 2001 from birth' until they entered kindergarten. The first part of the study was conducted when the children were around 9 months old and the later part 'when the children were approximately 2 years of age' (Andreassen & Fletcher 2007, pp. 1-1). In this study Andreassen and Fletcher reported that 58% of the cohorts displayed secure attachment (pp. 8-11). Further, while evaluating three long-term longitudinal studies for the stability of attachment security over time, Waters, Hamilton, and Weinfield (2000) found that 'In middle-class U.S. samples, approximately 65% to 75% of home-reared 1-year-olds are classified secure' (p. 679).

In a later follow up study of The Early Childhood Longitudinal Study, Birth Cohort (ECLS-B) Andreassen and West (2007) utilised the Attachment Q-Sort (AQS) as children 2-4 years old are too old to have their attachment status evaluated by the Strange Situation. This measure has been well utilised in such circumstances in a diverse range of countries and cultures. Andreassen and West (2007) state

It has also been used in a variety of cultures including children in China, Colombia, Germany, Israel, Japan, Norway, and the United States, among others. Thus, the cross-cultural appropriateness and the wide age range that the measure can accommodate, as well as its utility and robustness in different observational contexts and cultures, made it uniquely compatible with the goals and direction of the ECLS-B (p. 636).

Despite the variation in security of attachment levels in the diversity of populations these figures suggest that the number of parents unable to provide the conditions that can establish secure attachment is extremely high. It also shows that attachment status is a separate issue to class. While it can be exacerbated by poverty and class it is evident that it is still prevalent in middle class families.

An experiment called the Still-Face Experiment, designed by Ed Tronick, may give us a clue as to the types of parental behaviour that may lead to high numbers of insecure attachments in infants. Tronick was able to show just how distressing it can be to babies to have a loss of interaction with their attachment figure. In the experiment, a baby is placed in a harnessed high chair just out of touching distance of the parent, while the parent is instructed not to use any interactive facial expressions, but to keep her face still and unexpressive<sup>8</sup> (Tronick 2007). When unable to elicit a response from the mother, the baby becomes acutely distressed (Tronick 2007). Tronick states that the experiment was particularly useful in looking at the effects of maternal depression<sup>9</sup>. A depressed mother is less likely to respond to her infant's need for interaction, which, as the Still-Face Experiment shows, results in distress being experienced by the infant. While some stress in an infant's life, quickly followed by reconnection with their mother in a cycle of disruption and reconnection<sup>10</sup>, is believed to provide the foundation for emotional regulation and

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<sup>8</sup> Tronick (2007) explains:

In the experiment, we instructed the adult to hold a still-face and not move or talk after a period of normal interaction with the infant. The ... results were dramatic. Infants attempted to solicit the mother's attention and when their efforts failed they looked away, withdrew, and expressed sad and angry affect. The infant was actively regulating the interaction and was apprehending and responding to the adult's perturbed communication. The critical implication is that in normal exchanges infants also apprehend and respond to the adult's expressed meaning (p. 12).

<sup>9</sup> Tronick (2007) concludes that maternal depression 'disrupts the establishment of a dyadic infant-mother system' and deprives infants of 'experiencing dyadically expanded states of consciousness' (p. 347). This Tronick suggests, 'forces the infant into a self-regulatory pattern of coping that further constricts his or her experience', the consequences is 'a limitation of the affective development of their mind' (p. 347).

<sup>10</sup> Siegel (2012b) explains how the process of responsive caregiving promotes a feeling of security within the infant:

When a child experiences a break in the attuned, contingent communication – as will inevitably happen – the sensitive caregiver mindfully takes note of that rupture and then engages in the crucial process of interactive repair to re-establish the

wellbeing (Siegel 2012a, p. 142), long duration stress without repair can be toxic, resulting in the expectant infant developing ‘a maladaptive stress response’ (Narvaez & Gleason 2013, p. 310). Repeated early stressful environments can, according to Narvaez (2014), lead ‘to neurotoxicity and cell death and shrinking’, influencing memory and causing ‘growth inhibiting effects on the nervous system’ (Narvaez 2014, p. 140). Buss et al (2012) further explains that the stress hormone cortisol

... is one of the primary biomarkers of the physiologically stressed state because its production, bioavailability, and activity is altered by all adverse conditions that have been shown to program the developing brain. Thus, although glucocorticoids [cortisol in humans] play an essential role in normal brain development, abnormal or inappropriate levels, particularly during sensitive periods, may induce neurotoxicity with detrimental long-term consequences (p. E1312).

These detrimental, long-term consequences are expressed in reduced mental wellbeing and ‘related to depression, violent behaviour, and stimulus seeking’ (Narvaez et al. 2013a, p. 457). This evidence shows just how vulnerable infants are to environments which produce ongoing stress. Conversely, a positive nurturing environment characterised by ‘responsive care with coregulated communication patterns is related to good parasympathetic vagal tone’, critical for ‘well-functioning digestive, cardiac, respiratory, and immune as well as emotional systems’ (Narvaez et al. 2013b, p. 12). These findings indicate that secure attachment also results in positive *physical* wellbeing.

Despite the volumes of neuroscientific data which support attachment theory, dissenters still exist, although they are few in number. John Bruer (1999), for instance, in *The Myth of the First Three Years*, was highly critical of the notion that the first three years of life are foundational to later wellbeing. According to Bruer (1999), neuroscientists claim that brain development after three years consists only in eliminating synapses rather than forming new ones, and this is why they claim that the first three years are so crucial (p. 12); however, I believe scientists would view this as a gross oversimplification of the evidence. Although synaptic pruning does take place, beginning at 8 months, and results in a halving of the

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attuned connection. No parent is perfect, and no relationship is without challenging moments. The key to security is not perfect attunement, but the intention for connection and the repair when our human lives encounter the unavoidable miscommunications. When a rupture occurs, an intensification of emotion ensues that interrupts closely aligned connections even further. The result is a tumbling out of alignment, a feeling disconnection and despair, and a longing for reconnection. ... After a disconnection, equilibrium is established through dyadic realignment at the heart of repair. This is the cycle of connection, disconnection, dysregulation, reconnection, and repair (p. 20-3).

number of synaptic connections by the age of 10 years, scientists do not state that synaptic connections remain static (Hawley 1996). They do however state that early patterning is foundational (Knickmeyer et al. 2008; Narvaez 2014; Narvaez et al. 2013b; Schore 1994, 2013). In a recent interview, Bruer was reported to say that his criticism of neuroscience, spelt out in his book 15 years previously, still stands. He also said that ‘babies need somebody to care for them, but it doesn’t matter who that person is’ (Smith 2014). To state that it doesn’t matter who cares for the infant has been invalidated by research. Bruer does concede that ‘early experiences are important, but probably do not set your patterns for life’ (Smith 2014). Bruer doesn’t say why he thinks early experiences are important. As Narvaez (2014) states in reply to Bruer and other critics, the evidence cannot be denied as ‘Experiences of attachment represent neurobiological effects that can be measured in vagal tone, stress response, and neurotransmitter functioning’ (p. 67). Does Bruer suggest that, despite the evidence, we can happily assume the science not accurate? When there is so much scientific evidence that seemingly contradicts Bruer’s view, I suggest we have to assume it, rather than Bruer, may be right.

If the neuroscientists are correct in reporting that infants appear to need responsive, loving care provided by an enduring other to develop healthy brains and functioning, then it is right to question whether child care institutions can deliver this kind of nurturing - a subject to which I shall now turn.

## **Childcare**

As stated in the introduction of this thesis, there is a growing expectation that families will place their infants into childcare institutions in order to return to work. It is therefore necessary to evaluate whether the above research can be used as a guide to assess the suitability of childcare. I will argue that additional research which looks to the cortisol levels of infants while in formal childcare provides a compelling reason for childcare to be rejected as an option, particularly for the under threes.

Although I will go on to argue that in the best case scenario an infant will be cared for by its mother, it is true, as Ainsworth (1979) states, that

... ethological-evolutionary attachment theory implies that it is an essential part of the ground plan of the human species—as well as that of many other species—for an infant to become attached to a mother figure. This figure need not be the natural mother but can be anyone who plays the role of principal caregiver. This ground plan is fulfilled, except under extraordinary circumstances when the baby experiences too little interaction with any one caregiver to support the formation of an attachment (p. 932).

The most obvious issue with childcare does appear to be a problem of precisely the kind that Ainsworth elucidates: ‘too little interaction with any one caregiver to support the formation of attachment’. In the absence of an attachment relationship while in childcare, the infant has no-one to provide them with a sense of security in times of distress. And evidence is increasingly showing that stress is experienced in high levels in childcare institutions.

Vermeer and van IJzendoorn (2006), who undertook a review and meta-analysis of cortisol levels at childcare, found ‘that at daycare children display higher cortisol levels compared to the home setting’ and that there were ‘significant increases from morning to afternoon, but at daycare only’ (p. 390). This suggests that children at home did not experience higher levels of cortisol during the day, whereas the longer the time that infants spent in childcare the higher their stress levels became. Vermeer and van IJzendoorn (2006) also stated that:

Age appeared to be the most significant moderator of this relation. It was shown that the effect of daycare attendance on cortisol excretion was especially notable in children younger than 36 months (p. 390).

This finding is highly significant, indicating that children under 36 months have greater difficulty coping with long-duration separations from their attachment figures. While Schore (2013) reports that some children in daycare negatively react to stress by ‘externalizing behaviour problems’, such as ‘aggression and disobedience’ (p. 52), other studies have found unreactive children can still have highly elevated cortisol levels (Vermeer & van IJzendoorn 2006). This indicates that we may be totally unaware of some infants experiencing high levels of stress while in childcare.

It may be that some children will receive *better* care in childcare than in their family environment. For a particular subgroup of infants classified as insecurely attached, who may have a fearful attachment with their parent, childcare can provide respite from their negative home environment. One study, which measured cortisol levels of children in

childcare, found that ‘for children from low-risk contexts, greater weekly hours in child care were predictive of higher cortisol levels’, whereas ‘for children facing several cumulative risk factors, greater hours in child care per week were predictive of lower cortisol levels’ (Berry et al. 2014, p. 514). So while childcare for most is associated with greater stress levels, for a few children with high-risk home environments stress may be reduced.

Another factor that requires consideration is the development of infant speech. Verbal communication research conducted by Ramirez-Esparza, Garcia-Sierra, and Kuhl (2014) analysed recordings of parent and infant verbal utterances once a month for an hour, for two and a half years. They say that their research was consistent with other data showing that social behaviour during language learning is particularly important. This includes eye contact, responsiveness to infant babbling, and phonetic sounding through the use of parentese<sup>11</sup> speech (p. 880). Ramirez-Esparza, Garcia-Sierra, and Kuhl (2014) concluded that, unlike general adult speech, ‘Parentese language input in one-on-one social contexts’ was ‘strongly and positively associated with concurrent infant speech and also with word production at 24 months’ (p. 888). This finding shows that, like so many other aspects of infant development, good speech is contingent on having sustained one-to-one interactions with another. While there is no doubt that some one-to-one interaction may take place in childcare institutions, when workers need to attend to four babies at a time these occurrences must be limited.

When Plato proposed the concept of crèches, he had no idea that bonding and connecting with infants were so integral to children’s long-term welfare. In trying to come up with a design for the most efficient and moral city, he proposed that those ‘who are good in war or other things’ must be encouraged to have children, and suggested that, ‘as the children are born, they’ll be taken over by the officials appointed for the purpose’, and they will send ‘the children of good parents to the nurses in charge of the rearing pen’ (Plato 380BC/1992, pp. 134, 460 b,c). Although he also advocated that mothers should go to the rearing pens to breastfeed, he stated that every precaution should be taken ‘to ensure that no mother knows her own child’ (Plato 380BC/1992, pp. 135, 460d). He advocated this as a way of

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<sup>11</sup> Formerly referred to as motherese, it is a speech style ‘simplified at the grammatical and lexical levels, and has a unique acoustic and visual signature: acoustically, it is characterized by higher pitch, slower tempo, and exaggerated intonation contours’, visually it ‘exaggerates articulatory gestures and social affect ...’ (Ramirez-Esparza, Garcia-Sierra & Kuhl 2014, p. 880).

freeing the best women from the burdens of child rearing, which would, he suggested, make 'it very easy for the wives of the guardians to have children' without the burden of them (Plato 380BC/1992, pp. 135, 460d). Plato appears to have believed that infants simply needed food and physical care to thrive. He did want the very best for these children, but misunderstood the most fundamental need infants have if they are to become virtuous, flourishing persons – that is, to experience an intimate connection with a responsive, enduring, loving other during infancy. It is interesting that crèches today are established for the same reason Plato advocated: to enable parents to be free of the burdens of childrearing, at least during their working and travelling hours. In the absence of the empirical evidence that is available today in regard to attachment, it is perhaps understandable that Plato was oblivious to the real needs of infants.

One organisation that does have ready access to the kinds of research I have detailed above is the Australian Association of Infant Mental Health Inc. (AAIMHI). In their paper on Childcare, the AAIMHI state that they aim to

...improve professional and public recognition that infancy is a critical period in psycho-social development, and to work for the improvement of the mental health and development of all infants and families (AAIMHI 2013, p. 1).

The AAIMHI also state that their position statement

...is based on the premise that new evidence shows that (early) relationships significantly shape brain circuits and lay the foundation for later developmental outcomes, from academic performance to mental health and interpersonal skills ... and that secure attachment is the foundation of children achieving their full life potential (AAIMHI 2013, p. 2).

Nonetheless, the organisation says that they are providing a guideline cognisant that:

... the placement of very young children in child care is underpinned by several important issues relating to parental employment, parental leave and allowances and social expectations of parenthood as well as the needs of infants and very young children (AAIMHI 2013, p. 1).

In making this statement the AAIMHI has apparently provided their guidelines with the prevailing societal expectation for childcare in mind. Nonetheless they state that

Child care for infants (0 to 3 years) must be of a high quality and children should be encouraged to form secondary, secure attachment bonds to their caregivers. To



facilitate this, staff-to-child ratios should be kept low (preferably 1:2 for infants in their first year) and staff turnover should be minimised (AAIMHI 2013, p. 2).

Indeed, for very young infants their guideline suggests 'one-to-one care from an appropriately trained care-giver should be considered'. The problem is that Australian Government ratio requirements for the childcare industry have been standardised to 1:4 infants (Australian 2016), not 1:2, or the 1:1 that AAIMHI recommends. Furthermore, the childcare industry is reported to have a high turnover of staff due 'to low levels of pay and professional recognition' (Wilson & Howard 4/8/2014); therefore it is particularly difficult to develop attachment relationships. It could thus be argued that the AAIMHI has produced an unrealistic, aspirational guideline.

Given the evidence I reported earlier in this chapter, and that offered by the AAIMHI which says it is essential that carers 'establish warm and responsive/sensitive care-giving', 'evidenced by the number of warm interactions during each session' (2013, p. 3), it seems there is an inherent conflict between what childcare is able to offer and the psychosocial needs of infants. The evidence suggests there are two major reasons why childcare cannot be the societal answer to parental expectations of a working life. The first is that the ratio of carers to infants makes it impossible for workers to offer responsive and sensitive care to four infants at one time. Second, while some childcare centres offer opportunities for infants to become familiar with the centre in the presence of their attachment figure prior to being left alone, this strategy, as Vermeer and van Ijzendoorn (2006) discuss, does not prevent the infant's cortisol levels from rising once left alone in the centre. Indeed, they found that the infant's cortisol levels in the centre rose even when still in the presence of their attachment figure (p. 394). Vermeer and van Ijzendoorn (2006) moot that this may be due to the fact that 'a peer group for very young children is a demanding context that involves frequent emotional arousal' (p. 390). Once the parent left, however, the infants' cortisol levels rose '75-100% higher than when at home (Vermeer & van Ijzendoorn 2006, p. 394).

Furthermore, evidence shows that elevated cortisol levels are partly responsible for the development of negative neural pathways affecting infant's long-term wellbeing (Buss et al. 2012; Narvaez 2014; Narvaez & Gleason 2013), as discussed earlier in this chapter. What we *do not* know, however, is how much damage may occur to each infant. We cannot see stress,

and we cannot know which infants are experiencing moderate levels and which extremely high levels without constantly measuring cortisol levels. Nor do we know whether sustained moderate or even low levels will have permanent effects on the infant's stress system.

Now that increasing numbers of infants are being placed in childcare it seems more vital than ever to understand the kinds of pressures infants face when they have no access to a primary attachment figure. Measuring cortisol levels does provide some evidence to show how some individuals may be faring, but this does not offer a routine pathway for the protection of children from stress. It does however confirm that separations from their attachment figures lead to measurable and sometimes very high levels of distress for many infants. Overall, this evidence tells us that childcare falls short on many of the parameters we know are essential for the positive formation of foundational emotional, social, and moral pathways that enable infants to gain the resources they need to flourish. While the exact proportion of infants who will sustain long-term deficits is impossible to quantify, we do know, based on the evidence at hand, that many will sustain long-term harms. Placing infants in childcare is like playing Russian roulette with their wellbeing, something we ought not do.

The evidence also appears to be telling us that the kind of drive that motivates parents toward the loving and nurturing of their infants cannot be neatly transferred to another. It is too much to expect that another person can love and adore another's infant to the same degree as can mothers and fathers, nor expect that they can readily become the attachment figure that infants have been shown to need. While there is no doubt that a child may be able to develop an attachment relationship with another person, such a relationship usually takes place with someone who lives in the home or with another who spends a great deal of time with the infant. To establish an attachment relationship outside of these parameters is technically possible but would take time to establish, and may not replace the primary attachment figure's importance to the infant in times of crisis (during a fall or an altercation with another child, for instance). Next I will discuss who *is* best placed to undertake the caring of infants.

## **Mothers and Fathers**

I have outlined some evidence above which indicates that mothers may be able to offer the best nurturance to their infants. In this section I will present more evidence as to why this is the case. Yet, while I will maintain this view, this is not to say that fathers cannot also become an attachment figure. Indeed, I will argue that they have a significant role to play toward the end of the second year of their infant's life, but it is mothers who have particular nurturing sensitivity which ensures that they are the preferred candidate in the initial stages of a child's life.

I have asserted previously that attachment theory and the infant neuroscience that has followed from it have explained that human infants require the love and protection of a responsive and enduring other to develop a sense of security. This love and protection is not something that we simply *decide* we need to provide infants however. Empirical data shows that women's bodies have a unique physiology designed not only to carry a developing embryo to infancy, but to foster the bonding of mothers with their babies.

Feldman et al (2007), for instance, state that their research into oxytocin and its relationship to bonding behaviour shows oxytocin or OT levels were

... stable across time, and oxytocin levels at early pregnancy and the postpartum period were related to a clearly defined set of maternal bonding behaviours, including gaze, vocalizations, positive affect, and affectionate touch; to attachment-related thoughts; and to frequent checking of the infant (p. 965).

Feldman et al argue that the kinds of behaviour I have previously discussed have been positively associated with the provision of secure attachment. Panksepp's (2013) investigations into maternal physiology appears to corroborate this. He states that

The physiology of maternal urges has been worked out in considerable detail. The massive hormonal changes at the end of pregnancy (declining progesterone and increasing estrogen, prolactin, and oxytocin) set the stage for the activation of maternal urges a few days before the young are born. This symphony of hormonal and neurochemical changes, especially the heightened secretions of oxytocin and prolactin, facilitate maternal moods that ensure strong social bonding with the offspring. Similar neurochemicals, especially oxytocin and endogenous opioids, promote infant bonding to the mother (p. 85).

Panksepp reports that neurochemicals not only trigger maternal bonding in the mother, but that infants' bodies are also subject to physiological changes which also support the bonding

process. While Panksepp does not specify with whom this bonding necessarily takes place, it is typically with the person who is undertaking the preponderance of care, and the person with whom breastfeeding is established – usually the mother. Like Panksepp, Mileva-Seitz, Afonso and Fleming (2013) state that a

... suite of hormones affect multiple neuropeptides and neurotransmitters to alter the brain's responsivity to infants and their cues. ... This heightened responsiveness is ... associated with changes in the mother's emotionality, attention, cognition and the valence she attaches to stimuli in her environment (p. 171).

These chemicals prime the mother to respond maternally toward her infant, although Mileva-Seitz, Afonso and Fleming also point out that such hormones may be mediated by human culture and maternal experience (p. 172). The hormones are generally highly influential however in arousing an intense emotional response which usually ensures that mothers have a life-long bond with their infant. However, there is not always such a bond. As the research indicates not all mothers will react in the same way toward their infants. Large et al (2010), report on a study which included statistics from 122 countries which investigated infanticide, suicide, and murder. They state that 'A region with a population of 1,000,000 with a typical infant homicide rate would report between 10 and 20 infant homicide events over 15 years' (p. 88). While it may be argued that infanticide on these figures is a universal phenomenon, the figures also show that such incidences are very rare in each of these populations. Research Numan and Insel (2003) can explain the variation in human mothering as it can be mediated by other means. They state they believe that 'the best theoretical model for the control of human maternal behaviour' has been strongly based on animal studies and shows that

... maximal maternal behavior will occur in a primate female if she (a) has a genotype that results in a confident (low-anxiety) personality; (b) had a secure relationship with her mother and also had experience with play mothering; (c) was exposed to the normal hormonal milieu associated with pregnancy, pregnancy termination, and the postpartum period; and (d) was exposed to low stress during pregnancy and the postpartum period in conjunction with good levels of social support. According to this model, changes in any one of these factors could cause decreases in maternal behavior, and, more importantly, multiple alterations in these factors might lead to infant neglect or abuse (p. 317).

Two things can be shown to flow from such findings. Firstly, that the social nature of mammals can mediate the hormonal cocktail that evidence shows are so prevalent during

pregnancy, childbirth, and lactation. But it can also be argued that human studies often reveal great similarities between ourselves and other species that this also shows that we must also be heavily influenced by the bodily systems to which have to take place for a pregnancy through to breastfeeding to take place. And that bonding will take place faster and more reliably when mediated by the hormonal changes associated with the birthing process. Also, if it were true that actions could release the necessary amount of hormones necessary for lifelong bonding between parents and their children and therefore that motherhood is socially constructed (I address this issue in Chapter Four), it could be argued that anyone wanting a child could readily negotiate with someone giving birth to become the parent of any given child. The fact that such a practice does not – to my knowledge – occur to a significant extent in any society, suggests that there must be some mechanism that ignites the initial process of bonding. Indeed Numan and Insel (2003) detail a large number of animal research which shows that there is a decline in some hormones that do not facilitate bonding and increases in other hormones known to be associated with maternal bonding in many species days prior to the birth of the infant and therefore prior to any possible behavioural changes in the mother. Given that this evidence is cross-species it would also suggest that hormones are indeed the precipitator of much maternal behaviour as it is readily observed in differing mammalian species. Mileva-Seitz, Afonso and Fleming (2013) also state that ‘Cross-species studies in rats, sheep, and primates indicated a striking similarity in the neuroanatomy underlying mothering’ (Mileva-Seitz, Afonso & Fleming 2013, p. 160).

So far we have focused on the mother. Other studies have focused on the underlying biological mechanisms within the infant which arouse *their* bonding behaviour. Trevarthen (2001), for instance, says that newborn infants recognise their mother’s voice. He states that

...preferential recognition of the voice of a mother acquired in utero can be demonstrated by the baby in appropriately timed and well-directed orienting and attending behaviors from a few hours after birth. Often a newborn smiles when it hears the mother’s voice. Immediately after birth this hearing the mother, backed by recognition of her odor and touch, attracts the infant to look at her face, recognition of which is then quickly learned (p. 100).

This suggests bonding is not a one way process but is aided by mothers’ and infants’ combined physiology. Further evidence of infant relational seeking comes from research

undertaken by Minagawa-Kawai et al (2009). They were able to show when using near-infrared spectroscopy that when infants viewed images of their mothers' and strangers' faces that an infant's 'facial-emotion processing, particularly positive emotional processing, are stronger for their own mother' (p. 290). In another experiment, Marin, Rapisardi and Tani (2015) investigated how infants use smell to differentiate their mother from others. They stated that

... infants who experience skin-to-skin contact with their own mothers from the first hours of life were able to distinguish and recognise their own mother's body smell as early as the second day of life (p. 239).

This evidence highlights yet another complex biological mechanism that exists to direct human babies to bond with the person with whom they are in close proximity after their birth.

The importance of parentese was discussed earlier in this chapter. In one study Johnson et al (2014) compared mothers' and fathers' vocalisations toward their infants when both parents were home (p. e1604), finding that, during the recording period,

... infants had relatively few vocal interactions with their fathers independent of their mothers. Any male adult response occurred in 27% to 30% of the blocks compared with any female adult response, which occurred in 88% to 94% of infant-initiated language blocks (p. e1606).

Johnson et al also found that 'infants show a preferential vocal response to their mothers' interactions (2014, p. e1609). Given the evidence that academic success and intelligence can be directly linked to parents' speech interactions with their children during infancy (Hart & Risley 1995), the difference between mothers' and fathers' verbal interactions is highly significant. It is another example, particularly when combined with other evidence, which appears to show that mothers operate with a higher level of sensitivity and responsivity to their infants than do fathers.

Perhaps the most powerful mechanism that differentiates the infant/mother from infant/father relationship during infancy is breastfeeding. Breastfeeding provides 'High levels of tactile stimulation and mutual touch to occur' and frequent opportunities for mothers and their infants to engage in mutual eye gazing or '*visual-facial attachment communications*', believed to be critical to early social development (Schorre 2013, p. 35).

Furthermore, the constituents of breastmilk itself are the most beneficial substances for human development, offering many positive physiological benefits for the infant including 'better visual acuity', higher intelligence scores (Michaelsen et al. 2003, pp. 150-151), and 'substantial protection from hospitalization for infectious disease in infancy' (Tarrant et al. 2010, p. 852). It has been found that the mother's breastmilk even adjusts to the needs of pre-term infants<sup>12</sup> providing the extra supportive constituents they require. The benefits of breastfeeding have also been found to be long-term, being sustained into childhood. Julvez et al (2014) state that

...prolonged full breastfeeding demonstrated strong and independent associations with improved neuropsychological performance of children of 4 years of age, particularly executive functioning (p. 154).

Other researchers have now found that breastfeeding also provides some protection to the child from diabetes (Pereira, Alfenas & Araújo 2014) and depression (Narvaez et al. 2013b). Based on this kind of research, the World Health Organisation now recommends breastfeeding for a minimum of two years (WHO 2014). In *Breastfeeding: A Guide to the Medical Profession*, Lawrence and Lawrence provide an account of the findings of several important research papers which maintain that the unique composition of human breastmilk delivers the ideal nutrients for 'brain growth, especially in the first year of life' (Lawrence & Lawrence 2016). They offer a detailed explanation of how specific nutrients<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Secretory immunoglobulin A levels in colostrum and milk of mothers of preterm neonates were significantly higher than in the mothers of term neonates, demonstrating immunological adaptation in preterm neonate breast-feeding (Araújo et al. 2005, p. 357).

<sup>13</sup> Cholesterol, docosahexaenoic acid (DHA), and taurine are particularly important.... The composition of human milk is a delicate balance of macronutrients and micronutrients, each in the proper proportion to enhance absorption. Ligands bind to some micronutrients to enhance their absorption. Enzymes also contribute to the digestion and absorption of all nutrients. All enzymes and hormones have been destroyed by processing in infant formulas. ... An excellent example of balance is the action of lactoferrin, which binds iron to make it unavailable for *Escherichia coli*, which depends on iron for growth. When the iron is bound, *E. coli* cannot flourish and the normal flora of the newborn gut, *Lactobacillus bifidus* (*Bifidobacterium bifidum*), can thrive. In addition, the small amount of iron in human milk is almost totally absorbed, whereas only about 10% of the iron in formula is absorbed by the infant. Nutrients such as proteins are examples of constituents in human milk with multiple functions, which include preventing infection and inflammation, promoting growth, transporting micro minerals, catalyzing reactions, and synthesizing nutrients (Lawrence & Lawrence 2016).

contribute to the benefits of breastfeeding, and detail a longitudinal study showing that breastfeeding is positively associated with many other aspects of human health<sup>14</sup>.

The long list of positive outcomes that Lawrence and Lawrence attribute to breastfeeding provides further compelling reasons for mothers being the preferred candidate to undertake the maternal care of infants. However, that is not to say that breastfeeding is an easy physical or psychological choice for mothers to make. Many women do not breastfeed or do not breastfeed for long, for a long list of reasons (Australian-Government 2010; Gill et al. 2004; Mancini 2016; Thompson et al. 2011). Hinic (2016) studied the effects of birth trauma and its relationship to breastfeeding rates. Mancini (2016) suggests that body image and embarrassment are contributing factors to the uptake of breastfeeding as it 'has been related to social disapproval of breastfeeding in public' (p. 3). In a 2004 study Gill (2004) found that modesty appeared to be an especially strong barrier to breastfeeding in a low-income Mexican American study group (p. 46). In an Australian Government survey the reasons most often cited for not breastfeeding were 'previously unsuccessful experience' (38%), 'so my partner can share feeding' (29%) and 'infant formula as good as breastmilk' (26%)' (2010, p. vi). Conversely another study looked at the factors which were positively correlated with breastfeeding (Hinic 2016), these were

Breastfeeding self-efficacy was positively correlated with birth satisfaction, number of children, partner support of breastfeeding, intention to breastfeed, intention to breastfeed exclusively for 6 months, and feeling prepared for birth' (p. 649).

However, in an American national survey, while breastfeeding rates were lower in the first instance than those in Australia, the reason thought to account for the dropping of breastfeeding between the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> months was return to work (Li et al. 2005). Returning to work was also the most often cited reason for not initially taking up breastfeeding (Li et al. 2005). There are clearly many and varied reasons women do not breastfeed or have barriers

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<sup>14</sup> Lawrence and Lawrence (2016) positively associated outcomes of breastfeeding - insulin resistance and hypertension in later life; positive cardiovascular health; lower 120 minute glucose levels; lower levels of obesity; protected by leukocytes, specific antibodies, and other antimicrobial factors from many common infections; the risk for death from diarrhoea was 14 times more frequent in formula-fed infants; risk of death from respiratory illness was 4 times more frequent; reduced incidence of childhood lymphoma, type I insulin-dependent diabetes... type 2 diabetes and Crohn disease; lowered rates and severity of eczema and asthma; higher cognitive and intellectually functioning; increased white matter and subcortical gray matter volume; children were more mature, secure, and assertive; premature infants were more advanced developmentally; had increased measures educational achievement and general intelligence; improved neurologic outcomes.



to breastfeeding. Ultimately, however, what I am interested in this thesis is delineating what represents the ideal situation for any infant. And that is that they are nurtured and thus breastfed by their healthy, responsive, and available birth mother whenever possible.

Some fathers can and do bottle-feed their infants expressed breastmilk, but, while the child gains the nutrient rich milk, it can be argued that this practice denies the infant a level of maternal intimacy. Prescott (2013) describes bottle-feeding as

... perhaps the single worst invention of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, as it deprives the infant/child of not only essential physical nutrients that are absent in formula milk but also the essential sensory-emotional nutrients that can only be obtained at the breast of the mother – touch, movement, smell, and taste of the mother's body – that forms the foundation for intimacy, pleasure, and love of mother ... (p. 427).

These important aspects of breastfeeding are often overlooked, or at least underestimated, but they do reflect the holistic and complex nature of the relationship between mother and infant. It also tells us that something is still lost when breastmilk is delivered via a bottle. There is also a negative association between returning to work and breastfeeding initiation and breast feeding duration (Chatterji & Frick 2003, p. 3). While it is possible for women other than the mother to lactate in order to breastfeed another's infant, such occurrences are rare in the West. In most cases breastfeeding is exclusively a mother's domain.

Although I have outlined many benefits to infants of consuming breastmilk, this is not to say that mothers do not also derive some benefits. Research shows that women who *do not* breastfeed 'are more vulnerable to developing breast and ovarian cancers and chronic diseases' (Sulaiman, Amir & Liamputtong 2013, p. 282). The hormone oxytocin, released during breastfeeding, is not only associated with stimulating sociability and caregiving behaviour, but also induces uterine contractions, assisting the uterus to recover its shape and position after delivery. Oxytocin also has other benefits to mothers as it lowers anxiety, blood pressure and cortisol levels (Uvnäs-Moberg 2013, p. 300), as well as lowering stress in mothers who breastfeed for longer durations (Uvnäs-Moberg 2013, p. 301). Julvez et al (Julvez et al. 2014) state that

Mothers receive physical stimulation during breastfeeding, which promotes higher levels of oxytocin release in the blood and milk. If this process is repeated over a long period it can benefit the mother's mood, and may, indirectly, affect the child's neurodevelopment (Julvez et al. 2014, p. 154).

The interactive nature of physiological and psychological benefits for both mother and infant is another demonstration of the intricate links that go to make up the interactional functioning between the dyad. Motherhood and the biological aspects of it are not, and are not likely to become in the foreseeable future at least, interchangeable with that of men. Being female necessarily means women will remain the child bearers, main attachment figures, and breastfeeders of their children. This fact does draw a biological distinction between the roles of females and males.

This is not to say that fathers do not have a role to play in the caring of their infants. While men do have surges of the hormone oxytocin which increase their desire to be close to another when they have a close relationship with their partner and infant, they have been shown to elicit a type of responsiveness toward the infant different from that of mothers. Feldman states that, counter to their expectations, they 'found comparable levels of baseline OT in fathers and mothers' (Feldman 2012); however, they stated that

... consistent with findings in biparental mammals, OT in mothers correlated with the social-affective repertoire, including maternal gaze, affect, vocalizations, and affectionate touch, whereas OT in fathers was associated with the object-oriented stimulatory play, consisting of positive arousal, object exploration, and stimulatory touch (p. 385).

From Feldman's research it seems we can assume OT stimulates different behavioural drivers in mothers and fathers toward their infants. These findings are corroborated by Schore (Schore 1994, 2013) who states that it is in the first year of life that the mother is the major source of environmental stimulation for maturation of the child's developing biology and fear regulation, whereas 'in the second year the father is critically involved in male and female toddlers' aggression regulation' (Schore 2013, p. 43). Schore's research has shown that while intensive maternal nurturing affects the developing right brain structures, the later developing (toward the end of the second year of life) left-brain structures are 'critically impacted by the father-child relationship' (Schore 2013, p. 43). Flanders, Herman and Paquette (2013) also found that fathers are more likely to spontaneously engage in play, believed to be critical to the social and physical development of the left brain (Flanders, Herman & Paquette 2013, p. 373). The fact that oxytocin appears to elicit different behaviours in women and men assists us in building a picture of differences which are significant to the nurturing process.

However, fathers are taking an increasingly hands on approach to parenting. As Smith (2009) points out fathers now spend more time with their children than in any time since surveys measuring time spent with children have been undertaken, and stay-at-home Dad's numbers are increasing compared to stay-at-home mothers (p. xi). While research shows that a father's hormones can fluctuate when he has close proximity with a mother and child after the child's birth, it remains inconclusive as to whether these hormones can lead to greater levels of nurturing behaviour in fathers (Saltzman & Ziegler 2014; Wynne-Edwards 2001). If further research is able to show that increases in various hormones do indeed increase in attentive fathers leading to greater levels of nurturing behaviour, this does not conflict with current knowledge about maternal hormones that are, as discussed above, known to increase maternal responsiveness to infants (Feldman 2012). However, what it may show is that anyone who spends time with and feels close to a pregnant woman and her subsequent infant, may also experience increases in levels of some hormones that increase their maternal behaviours. This may account for the level of nurturing behaviour not just of fathers of some infants, but also grandparents, adoptive parents, same sex partners etc.

A confluence of all the research I have detailed above appears to reveal that the distinct biological processes associated with pregnancy through to breastfeeding prime mothers to act in very specific ways toward their infants, delivering affectional touch, soothing vocalization, parentese, and a high level of responsiveness, to a degree that is not demonstrated in fathers. It is this level of attentiveness to the infant which seems to be so critical to an infant's psychological wellbeing. To argue that this research is not important would be to discount the neurophysiological and emotional ties that ignite deeply embedded emotional bonds built up over the nine months of pregnancy, and through the birthing and breastfeeding experiences.

Nevertheless, fathers do have an important role to play in the lives of their infants. Evidence clearly points toward fathers having a beneficial and influential role, but more particularly when play becomes important, later in the second year of life. While it must be acknowledged that not all mothers will be able to act toward their infant with optimal nurturance, it remains essential that the infant is cared for by a loving, responsive, enduring attachment figure in such a way that the infant feels loved and secure. Evidence shows that

there is not simply one uni-directional cause of maternal behaviour, as the vast hormonal changes that take place in the bodies of females during pregnancy, birthing, and lactation, can be mediated by other behavioural factors. However, what I am most interested in teasing out are the factors that can stimulate ideal maternal behaviour. I am not advocating that infants ought only to be nurtured by their mothers as on occasion some mothers will not be the preferred candidate, such as where the mother has been assessed as likely to pose physical or emotional harms to her infant. However, what I am advocating, given that infants appear to have the best chance of developing secure attachments when they are cared for optimally – that they are whenever possible nurtured by their responsive, proximal, breastfeeding mother. This would suggest that as adoptive parents, grandparents, and gay male couples cannot provide a breastfeeding mother (although some adoptive women and grandmothers for instance, have been able to stimulate lactation), that they do not represent the best case scenario for children. However, this is not to say that secure attachment cannot be facilitated in such circumstances. As long as certain factors are present – those of responsive, enduring, proximal, and loving care, infants may become securely attached. It is simply that breastfeeding mothers represent the optimal choice of attachment parent, as they are primed days prior to the birth of their baby by the hormones that circulate their bodies and the relationship they have developed with their infants over the months they are aware of their pregnancy. Other parents, particularly those who adopt can approach the ideal as their repeated loving actions can stimulate their love toward their particular child (which I discuss in greater detail in Chapter Six on love).

## **Conclusion**

In this chapter I have outlined attachment theory and the neuroscience which confirms that the nurturing that infants receive does lay the foundations of wellbeing. The evidence also showed that babies require far more than physical care – they also require psychological care which is transferred through the kind of nurturance that conveys to them that they are deeply loved and which provides them with a sense of security. I argued that when this is conveyed to the infant, and the infant thereby gains a sense of high level wellbeing, that this will support the development of social behaviours, resulting in a more open, resilient and

content individual who is able to regulate their emotions. This is central to their later gaining the ability to act as moral persons, as well as central to their capacity to flourish. I also pointed out, however, that around 40% of parents are not able to engender a sense of security in their infants. Given that research shows how important it is to support infants in gaining a sense of security, I argued that it is essential, if we are serious about enabling the wellbeing of citizens, that some form of education for parents needs to be available.

I then presented evidence which led to the conclusion that childcare does not offer an adequate solution for families, as those institutions cannot provide an adequate attachment figure to infants; nor do carers have the opportunity to give infants the responsive, loving, eye contact that infants continually require throughout the day. I also reported on research which showed that high cortisol levels are consistently experienced by many infants attending childcare institutions up to the age of three. I argued that, given high cortisol levels can be detrimental to neural developmental processes, the case against the use of childcare is thus reinforced.

Finally, I outlined the science which describes the neurochemical processes that mothers' bodies undergo during pregnancy and childbirth, and which in most cases ensure that mothers bond with their babies and thus provide the necessary minutiae of nurturing to them. I also outlined the benefits of breastmilk and the breastfeeding relationship, and how this enhanced the bonding between mother and infant. I finally argued that the physiological changes resulting from pregnancy, childbirth, bonding, and breastfeeding cause mothers to respond in a specific way – delivering affectionate touch, eye gazing, and soothing vocalizations – responses not as readily provided by fathers. Thus, I concluded that mothers ought to be the primary carers of their infants for at least the first eighteen months of their infant's life.

A synthesis of evidence also confirms the position I took in Chapter One: that parents ought to provide their children with the conditions which will enable them to flourish, and that such conditions are found in the minutiae of loving, responsive, and enduring nurturance.

Based on the empirical evidence, I make two normative claims:

- Mothers, by reason of their biology, are the preferred candidate to be the primary attachment figure for their infants and therefore ought to stay home for at least the first

eighteen months of their infant's life, and thereafter the infant ought to be nurtured by an attachment figure until the age of three.

- That parents ought to be taught which nurturing behaviours will result in the most beneficial neural development of their child, and also be provided with the means and support to be able to deliver this information – thus providing a sense of security to their infants.

However, making these claims is controversial on several levels. In the West, we have come to regard caring for children as a gender neutral activity; therefore, to suggest that mothers should take on the primary attachment role in the first instance and that they should stay home with their infants is to stand against a commonly accepted trend. I will address this controversial issue in Chapter Four on feminism. Making these normative claims also conflicts with some strands of thought within liberal political concepts, such as that families exist in the private realm and that independence and self-sufficiency are ideals of maturation. I will address these issues in Chapter Three. Invariably, some policy issues will also arise from having made these normative claims and from the discussions which emanate from them, which I will address in Chapter Seven.

## ***Chapter 3 - Liberalism***

In Chapter One, I concluded that flourishing is something we wish citizens to experience, and that parents ought to enable in their children. In Chapter Two, I outlined the empirical evidence which showed that certain nurturing behaviours were essential to the laying down of the foundations we know are necessary for infants' optimal development. I also detailed evidence from which I made two normative claims. First, I claimed that mothers ought to nurture their infants full-time for the first eighteen months, and thereafter be nurtured by an attachment figure until they are three years of age. The second claim was that parents ought to be provided with educational tools that will enable them to offer the most beneficial nurturing to their child, as well as be provided with the means and support to put their knowledge into practice – thus providing a sense of security to their infants.

While the empirical evidence I presented tells us that parents need to act in very specific ways if we are to ensure children's optimal development, parents are not acting accordingly. In this chapter I will argue that the responsibility to make the changes I have proposed falls to the state. Thus, I will examine what the liberal state's role is in the care and protection of its citizens and, more importantly, their children. I will discuss the views of Archard (2003, 2015b), Austin (2007), and Richards (2010), who have written at length on this issue. I will argue that despite their having a general belief in a need for limitations to state powers, they agree that the state nonetheless has a substantial role to play in ensuring children are supported in ways which enable them to reach certain standards or possess a particular skill set. I will conclude that indeed the state ought to take a more substantial role in parent's lives in order that the normative claims I have made can be turned into action. Requiring the state to take greater responsibility for children however, and to intervene to a more substantial degree in the educating of parents than is generally accepted, may conflict with modern views on privacy. I will therefore discuss the liberalist assumption that there should be limits to the state's powers in order that the family can exist free from the scrutiny of the state. I will question the belief in the need for differentiation between the public and private spheres, and investigate the benefits that are assumed to be gained by this distinction.

With this in mind I will ask how far the state can step into the private realm to educate parents before violating individual freedom – a concept that is fundamentally important to liberalism. I will contend that, while I have argued for greater state intervention into the affairs of the family in order to provision education for them, there has been a resurgence in the belief that the state should be increasingly hands off. One political philosopher who adheres to this view is Robert Nozick. I will explore his ideas at length as I feel that they are representative of several proponents of this view. I will compare and contrast his ideas with two older influential liberalist thinkers, Emmanuel Kant and John Stuart Mill. They offer ideas from two distinctive schools of thought that provide a background to some of the basic issues that are faced in this thesis. Therefore I will not spend time analysing and discussing their ideas in detail. The thesis does not aim to give a comprehensive account of these philosophers, rather it aims to synthesise general ethical views of which they are representative in conjunction with evidence that is coming out of neuroscience as it relates to the upbringing of infants.

I will argue that while Kant and Mill's legacy has situated liberalism in part in morality, as well as in other concerns, that more recently philosophers such as Nozick have driven the focus away from these orientations toward an over-valuation of individualism and autonomy. While individualism and autonomy have long been a central concern of liberalism, I will argue that Nozick's overrating of these ideas contains an inherent flaw: it orients Western society toward the belief that self-sufficiency and individual wealth accumulation are the greatest sources of happiness. I will argue that this is evidenced in the kind of capitalistic structures we have accepted, the way we focus on self-sufficiency, tax minimisation, and wealth accumulation. I will discuss these issues, examining the influence they have on the kind of thinking that pervades Western society today. Utilizing Kant and Mill to critique Nozick provides the background to some of the ideas that are discussed in Chapter Five on the ethics of care.

I will also argue that liberalist ideas of freedom from the state have supported capitalism's expansion. I will discuss what capitalism is, and argue that its growth has concentrated extreme wealth in the hands of the few, extreme wealth that has been used to wield power in ways that do not serve older liberalist ideals which sought to look after the citizens. I will finally argue that capitalism has, along with the Nozickian ideal of individualism, led



governments to hold an erroneous view that these ideas offer the key to happiness to society. This view has led to a neglect of alternative stances which place importance on human relationships and a sense of community. Thus, as the liberal state does not appear to adequately value the psychosocial needs of individuals, which I have previously shown present the markers of wellbeing, it cannot provide a model to help resolve the dilemma which families face when determining their priorities - if those priorities represent a conflict between themselves and the care arrangements they make for their infants.

### **The Liberal State and Its Role Regarding Children**

I have presented some compelling evidence in the two previous chapters which suggests that the solution we are adopting to enable both parents to return to work soon after the birth of their infants may be damaging our children's long-term wellbeing. I will argue that the state is the right organisation to implement the kind of changes that are required to find a more equitable solution for our infants, in line with the normative claims I have made. So it is necessary to investigate liberalism's past and present attitudes to ascertain the extent of responsibility it has for its citizens and their children. I will look to authors Archard (2003, 2015b), Austin (2007), and Richards (2010) who each have something to say with regard to the role of the state, and in particular the role of the state with regard to children. I will argue that there are precedents set which theoretically sanction the state in taking on a more extensive role concerning children, and therefore I will argue that the state ought to take a greater role in both the education and support of parents.

According to Archard (2015b), a longstanding attitude of the state toward its citizens is signified by the term *parens patriae*, which literally means "parent of the fatherland". Although this term was in use from the sixteenth century, rights for children were not specified in British or American law until 'the end of the nineteenth century' (Archard 2015b, p. 175). Just prior to this time, 'the first prosecution for child cruelty ... had to be brought under laws protecting animals, since none existed specifically for the protection of children' (Archard 2015b, p. 175). A greater interest in the welfare of children came not from a generalised idea that children should be protected for their own sake, but from the

circumstance that so many army recruits intended for the Boer War had to be rejected 'on the grounds of physical debility' (Archard 2015b, p. 176). Such a situation turned the state's attention toward the need for greater care of children in order that they were capable of fulfilling their roles as future citizens.

Alas, while the idea of *parens patriae* in theory suggests the attitude of a benevolent parent, the state has generally approached children with the attitude of a *reluctant* parent, only acting 'in the last instance' when parents have been judged to have 'failed in their role' and abused or neglected their children (Archard 2003, p. 120). Once assumed however the state's powers, Archard (2003) asserts, 'may be considerably greater than those possessed by adult citizens in their capacity as parents', as evidenced in a British court decision which stated that the state's powers were 'theoretically limitless'<sup>15</sup> (pp. 120-121). This has arguably set a precedent for an extension of the powers of the state over children's wellbeing.

It is right, I contend, that the state does take on a role which acts to protect children, particularly in cases when there has been abuse or neglect. Society does need to offer 'protection to those who cannot care for themselves' (Archard 2003, p. 120), as children of all ages are vulnerable. Richards (2010) articulates what this vulnerability can mean for children. He states that

Children who are mistreated have relatively little ability to cope with the aftermath of what has happened to them, and they remain vulnerable to more of the same. ... [It is] similar in some ways to that of a captive who is subjected to torture (p. 82).

Richards is right to use the word 'captive'. Children, and even more so infants, unless their treatment becomes publicly known are at the mercy of their parents. It is therefore with good reason that the state should take on a caring attitude toward children, intervening where necessary.

Undoubtedly, the state's intervention in these kinds of cases represents a vast improvement on the situation in earlier periods in Western history when parents were free to treat their

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<sup>15</sup> Archard is specifically referring here to the *Gillick* case (1986), where a mother took the state to court to have a local health authority withdraw a circular sent to doctors advising that they 'could counsel and inform young girls under the age of 16 about sexual matters' without the permission of their parents (p. 55). The mother lost the case.

children in almost any way they wished, with little exception (Grille 2005); however, determining where the line is to be drawn between clear cases of reportable abuse and neglect and unreportable parental under-care, is difficult to determine. As Richards (2010) states, 'not every parental failure' should result in an intervention by the state 'since no parent is perfect' (p. 82).

Loose parameters exist around some general duties which society has come to require of parents, and it is when parents fail at all or in some of these duties that they tend to come under the watchful eye of the state. Such duties include feeding children adequately such that they grow, seeking medical assistance when they are clearly ailing, clothing them with weather conditions in mind, and sending children to school. The state recognises that these kinds of duties represent essential requirements for children to grow into healthy citizens; it believes that families heavily influence the kind of persons children grow up to become. Education, in particular, Archard (2003) asserts, has become mandatory to 'ensure that children are educated to a certain minimum extent so that they can act as citizens' (p. 117). Such an idea has rightly become an enduring one.

Increasingly too the social and emotional state of infants and children has come under scrutiny with increased recognition of its importance to children's development. In Australia, for instance, emotional and social development is now also routinely measured along with physical, language, and communication skills when children begin their first year of full-time school (Australian-Government 2015). The document which outlines these milestones and reports on progress in achieving them, the Australian Early Development Census (AEDC), states that 'The AEDC domains have been shown to predict children's later outcomes in health, wellbeing and academic success' (Australian-Government 2015, p. 7). The recognition that it is now important to also collect data on emotional and social as well as physical development is, according to neuroscientific research, extremely important. Without this kind of data we cannot know just how pervasive problems in this area may be, nor do we have the data to support political policy change to address such issues.

Archard also argues that the state, in its child protection practices, must 'show a concern for the child's best interests but equally give due weight to the child's own views' (Archard 2003). In the case of infants, however, this is clearly impossible. I suggest that, as there is no

possibility of an infant's voice being heard, and in view of their particular vulnerability, there is a compelling need for the state to take a particular interest in them.

I therefore agree with Archard's argument that 'When balancing the state's role against the interests of parents ... parents do not, in virtue of being parents, have rights to determine what shall be done to their children' (2003, p. 117), or at least not without some limits, limits that will ensure the wellbeing of children. Believing that children do have a right to be afforded the conditions that will enable their wellbeing, Austin (2007) says that parents should have a legal obligation to provide minimum goods. Among the minimum goods Austin (2007) discusses is having access to a 'physically and emotionally secure environment in which to grow and develop' (p. 107). This is crucial, Austin states, 'for their well-being, and so parents should be under a legal obligation to provide this type of environment' (p. 107).

Yet the state tends to only intervene in extreme cases. Such minimal intervention assumes that almost all parents *do* act appropriately toward their children, with some rare exceptions; however, as statistics show and as discussed in Chapter Two, this is not the case. Many parents fail to provide an environment where their infants are thriving emotionally; in fact, some 40% of infants (Moullin, Waldfogel & Washbrook 2014, p. 3) do not gain a sense of security from their primary attachment relationship. This indicates two things: first, that state authorities, despite having a greater awareness of the importance of the psychological welfare of children, are still concentrating on the kind of abuse which is visible - physical abuse or neglect; and second, that in lieu of removing children from families where children display insecure attachment, that parents should be provided with some kind of intervention to help them improve their nurturing techniques. The consequence of failing to act in this regard is likely to be even greater levels of dysfunctionality during infancy and beyond. It falls to the state therefore to take some comprehensive action to address this growing issue. Asking the state to take action to ensure a greater level of wellbeing of the population during infancy, however, clashes with modern views on privacy and with the notion that the state should not interfere in the private sphere of the family, a topic I shall examine next.

## **Public and Private Spheres**

While it is generally accepted that the liberal state has some role to play in the care and protection of children, there is at the same time a general belief that people's private lives ought to be free from the scrutiny of the state. Freedom of the individual is therefore manifest in the concept of boundaries between public and private spheres. I will examine what the metaphorical drawing of boundaries between the public political and the domestic private domains represents. I will engage with Archard (2015b) and Austin (2007) to look at how these boundaries have affected our expectations of privacy from the state, and critique their purpose and effectiveness. This discussion highlights the tension that arises from the dialogue above where I called for more extensive use of state powers in regard to the need for the state to provide educational information to parents.. While it is asserted that the private sphere offers the protection of privacy to families, I will argue that this view leaves children vulnerable when there is no mechanism for the state to disseminate information that could enable parents to provide more effective care to their infant. The kind of care that will more likely result in the infants later ability to flourish.

While it is accepted that the public sphere refers to what takes place in the public political and administrative realm, it is also generally accepted that the private sphere is one in which personal and family life resides. Thus the family dwells in a private sphere, away from the scrutiny of the state. Ramsay (2004) articulates a generalised view of the public and private domains, as follows:

The public sphere is thought of as those areas of life where the state may legitimately intervene; the private sphere, those areas of life where the individual is to be left alone, free from state interference. The aim is to protect an area of social or personal life that is free from the exercise of political power (p. 191).

This aim can be translated into the assumption that families should be free to conduct their private affairs as they see fit, away from the scrutiny of the state. On the surface this appears to be a perfectly reasonable concept. Interestingly though, it is a concept that has developed along with the nuclear family. Archard (2015b) explains that

... the kind of privacy to which the twentieth-century Western family feels entitled and which it has come to expect is historical and culturally very specific. The phenomenon of the private nuclear family, a self-contained household of kin only, living within its own well-defined space, is a peculiarly twentieth-century and

Western one, a compound of various changes – social, economic, demographic, cultural and even architectural (p. 193).

The idea that the concept of the private realm has coincided with the development of the small, contained nuclear family has some relevance to issues that will arise in this and later chapters. It is significant that, prior to the rise of the nuclear family, families ‘enjoyed a quite significantly smaller degree of privacy’ (Archard 2015b, p. 193). As Archard’s (2015b) also points out, there is, ‘no reason to think that the kind of familial privacy modern Western nuclear families believe it proper to enjoy derives from an invariant, irreducible and inevitable human need’ (p. 194). Yet freedom from the scrutiny of the state has been taken as a given and accepted into modern Western life. It is right to ask why we want and expect privacy, and to ask what benefits might accrue, or what negative outcomes may arise, as a result. Archard (2015b) explores this issue, submitting his conclusion that ‘the only plausible way to defend the view that parental privacy is valuable in itself lies with a more general and influential defence of privacy in terms of intimacy’ (p. 181). On this view, there is no reason to require privacy from the state other than for reasons of intimacy. The idea that privacy has extended to parenting can have negative effects. Archard (2015b) states that

Intimates should have their privacy respected only so long as there is no good reason to intrude upon it. It is naturally very hard to see what, in general, such reasons could be in the case of lovers or friends. But in the case of the relationship between parent and child there is one. This is that some parents do abuse or seriously neglect their children. Moreover, it can continue unobserved (p. 192).

The right to family privacy therefore, away from the scrutiny of the state, Archard (2015b) observes, ‘can seriously collude with the perpetration of very significant harm to children’ (p. 192). It can also be argued that it can collude with less significant but nonetheless long-term harms; for instance, the fact that the state does not educate parents about nurturing techniques that could prevent harms represents a failure for both parents and children. This situation highlights an issue inherent in the liberal state, as well as the dilemma at hand: how we are to balance the assumed need for parental autonomy and freedoms with the needs of infants and children. Bagattini (2015) refers to this dilemma as ‘the notorious liberal conflict between freedom and safety’ (p. 202); he asserts however that there is a way around this dilemma by placing regulatory controls on parents which can guarantee the safety of children. This would necessarily result in parents losing ‘at least some of their liberties as parents’ (p. 202) however, we need to ask whether this really matters if it results

in greater protections for children. Indeed, do we need the degree of privacy that the liberal state currently affords parents? The answer must be no. There ought to be no reason why parents cannot still enjoy privacy in their intimate arrangements, while losing some privacy in regard to their children. Parents inevitably lose some of this privacy if they are to have more involvement with the state in regard to their children, as I have asserted they require. We must therefore resile from the idea that families require the high degree of privacy that has previously been deemed necessary.

Furthermore, the idea that parents should be free to raise their children how they wish makes two assumptions about parents: first, that parents know how to nurture their young to acceptable standards; and second, that they do not want nurturing education. Looking at the former point, parents often report feeling 'at sea' when taking their new, vulnerable, and speechless infant home for the first time. A commonly asked rhetorical question is: 'Where is the rulebook?', and a frequent response is: 'Unfortunately children don't come with a set of instructions'. So from where does the state assume parents gain their knowledge? Once, it may have been argued, we learned by observation and hands-on experience when we lived in extended families or involved communities; however, these circumstances are rarely those of Western families today. Most may not have experienced or witnessed caring for tiny infants previously. I contend therefore that parents these days do not hold the kind of knowledge that the state currently assumes they have.

The liberal state assumes that parents want complete privacy from that state, which I argue is equally untrue. My experience as a social worker for ten years has shown that, when providing parenting information to groups of parents, rather than reacting negatively to being provided information, they were eager to receive it, often requesting further information. While my experience is only an anecdotal account, it can tell us that at least some parents do want information about the role they undertake as parents. I contend that families are in fact often hungry for information which can support their parenting knowledge. The reason the state is hesitant to interfere in what are perceived as freedoms of the family also arises from the assumption that autonomy (a topic I addressed in Chapter One and will say more about in Chapter Five) is paramount, and that it resides in having the freedoms to make decisions on matters affecting our own interests (Archard 2015a, p. 4).

While I have conceded that many parents would be open to greater involvement of the state in supporting their parenting, at the same time the idea that we ought to have extensive freedoms to make decisions affecting our own interests has increasingly gained traction in Western society. Nozick, one of this idea's greatest proponents, has been highly influential in this regard. Classified as a libertarian, his ideas will be reviewed next.

### **Nozick's Liberalism**

I have argued above that there is no apparent reason for the maintenance of private realm boundaries, other than for the privacy of intimate matters. A relaxation of private boundaries would enable the state to exercise greater intervention in regard to the wellbeing of children. As I also pointed out, however, this would intrude on the perceived freedoms the liberal state assumes persons want. And while it may seem reasonable to reduce such freedoms, there is an increasingly pervasive shift toward an increase in individual freedom. One political philosopher to strongly advocate for greater individual freedom is Robert Nozick, considered to be a classical liberal or libertarian (Kymlicka 2005b). I will explore Nozick's views as I feel they are representative of a number of philosopher's views who also argue for the minimal state. I will argue that, despite having less acceptance and philosophical prominence than other influential philosophers such as Kant and Mill, whom I will also discuss, a Nozickian style view has become dominant in society.

Although Nozick (1974) believed there was a moral priority in individual rights to freedom, neither happiness nor morality were Nozick's chief concerns. His greatest interest was in the freedom of the individual. In the opening sentences in the preface of his book *Anarchy, State, and Utopia*, he states that

Individuals have rights, and there are things no person or group may do to them (without violating their rights). So strong and far-reaching are these rights that they raise the question of what, if anything, the state and its officials may do? (1974, p. ix).

This is a strong, unequivocal statement. Nozick (1974) argues that the state's role should be 'limited to the narrow functions of protection against force, theft, fraud, enforcement of contracts, and so on', as 'any more extensive state will violate persons' rights not to be forced to do certain things ...' (p. ix). Nozick argues there is an implication generated by his position, that the 'state may not use its coercive apparatus for the purpose of getting some



citizens to aid others, or in order to prohibit activities to people for their own good or protection' (Nozick 1974). Nozick is concerned that persons may be compelled to be part of a redistributive justice system which philosopher John Rawls famously advocates. Rawls wanted to secure social and economic equality (Rawls 1992), while Nozick argues that any redistribution of goods impinges on the freedoms of individuals asked to contribute to the redistribution. Nozick (1974) says that

The minimal state treats us as inviolate individuals, who may not be used in certain ways by others as means or tools or instruments or resources; it treats us as persons having individual rights with the dignity this constitutes. Treating us with respect by respecting our rights, it allows us, individually or with whom we choose, to choose our life and to realize our ends and our conception of ourselves ... How *dare* any state or group of individuals do more. Or less (p. 334).

Nozick believes that the individual will be violated and disrespected by the state if they are required to be involved in any redistribution system. He is adamant that freedom of the individual means freedom from any involvement in redistribution, except for the costs that may be associated with ensuring safety (1974, pp. 26-27). While Nozick discusses at length many types of redistribution theory, I will focus on what he has to say about taxation, as it is this system that is most often used by Western societies. It is also worth discussing as it allows us to understand to a greater depth Nozick's position on the individual. Nozick (1974) states that 'Taxation of earnings from labor is on a par with forced labor' (p. 169). Nozick's (1974) reasoning for his position is thus:

The man who chooses to work longer to gain an income more than sufficient for his basic needs prefers some extra goods or services to the leisure and activities he could perform during the possible nonworking hours; whereas the man who chooses not to work the extra time prefers the leisure activities to the extra goods or services he could acquire by working more. Given this, if it would be illegitimate for a tax system to seize some of a man's leisure (forced labor) for the purpose of serving the needy, how can it be legitimate for a tax system to seize some of a man's goods for that purpose? (p. 170).

This argument oversimplifies the issue however. Nozick does not include factors such as whether either of the men is required to work standard hours, or how much they are paid per hour, or whether they have a choice to work longer hours. Is one paid \$16 per hour and the other \$500? How are leisure activities measured? Is, say, coaching your child's sporting team a leisure activity? Even though it may be considered leisure by one, others may see it as a public service which has broad benefits within the community. Can such a thing be

measured in dollar terms? These are just a few of numerous questions that would need to be answered to properly assess Nozick's scenario. In addition, to say that it is not legitimate to provide for the needy is to assume that the 'needy' are separate from others in society. The needy may be made up of those who have become unemployed, for instance, because a business owner has for some reason ceased trading. The needy may also include a person who was involved in an industrial accident, which now prevents them from working, through no fault of their own. A needy person may become employed after receiving benefits from the state, benefits which enabled them to obtain employment. A person may be needy because they were badly abused as a child, been stymied by a lack of emotional resources, and have therefore been unable to acquire an education. Nozick appears to be preoccupied however with the worry that giving to another may constitute being a 'sucker'. While discussing a possible philanthropic scenario, Nozick asks: 'And won't they feel like suckers if they give while others do not?' (p. 265). He also discusses what he refers to as the 'free-rider problem' (p. 267):

Let us now turn to why the person's contribution (of the same amount of money as under the compulsory scheme) might "cost" him more. He might feel that only "suckers" or "saps" make special sacrifices when others are "getting away" with not making any; or he might be upset by the worsening of his position relative to those who don't contribute; or this worsening of relative position might put him in worse competitive position (relative to these others) to gain something he wants (p. 267).

Nozick's discussion sounds paranoid and petty, not unlike children who are stuck in a car with one another when one believes that the other has taken more lollies from the packet. One child feels that, if they don't complain and gain some justice, the other may get away with the crime, and thus he is worried he may be viewed as a sucker (no pun intended). Nozick views people as so separate from one another that he cannot see that they have any relationship to each other whatsoever - he appears to view them as though they operate as completely separate entities within their own society.

Nozick's view may have some legitimacy if we all lived as self-sufficient hermits, with no need to ever exchange resources with anyone else; however, human society has grown in such a way that people are dependent on a myriad of others to produce goods and services - and we are all part of that. It is this reality that Kymlicka (2005a) points to as a major challenge for liberalism. He says liberal philosophers need to 'explain why individual

freedom should have priority over competing values such as community ...' (p. 514). He says that liberalism's critics say that 'liberalism is self-defeating – liberals privilege individual rights, even when this undermines the social conditions which make individual freedom valuable' (Kymlicka 2005a, p. 515). If liberalism in general creates such an issue, then Nozick's position sets up a major friction. We established in Chapter One that what needs to be encouraged and enabled in order to facilitate greater propensity to flourish is an attitude that promotes companionship, empathetic connection, and a feeling of oneness with others; thus Nozick's stance must be viewed as flourishing's antithesis.

While Nozick (1974) rejects the idea of redistribution, he does concede that victims of injustice who 'generally do worse than they otherwise would' because of such injustice may be 'owed compensation by those who benefited by the injustices' (p. 231). He calls this the principle of rectification. Although he concludes that 'past injustices may be so great as to make necessary in the short run a more extensive state in order to rectify them' (p. 231), he does not satisfactorily explain how these past injustices may be calculated nor redistributed. His scenario does seem to be cast purely in terms of financial injustice. If we were to extend his principle of rectification to the wellbeing of children, however, and imagine that Nozick may agree that a child is due some compensation and redistribution by the state because of past harms, it is impossible to know how he might go about calculating the amount of compensation to which these persons may be entitled. His idea also seeks to rectify past injustice rather than to formulate ideas that prevent injustice in the first place. Nozick seems unable to recognise that general taxation may have something positive to provide individuals on a personal level. Redistribution seeks to prevent harms befalling persons. Public housing for instance may prevent a child growing up in homelessness, and therefore have more likelihood of engaging in education. They may thus become a productive member of society, contributing to government coffers, and may indeed be one of the many who provides a service to someone such as Nozick. Without public housing, the same person may have been unable to attend an educational facility, and without an education may have become a beggar at the train station Nozick walks by each day, apparently devaluing his and everyone else's life by being confronted by homeless, poor people alienated from societal life. This highlights a great limitation in Nozick's position – it lacks other regard.

## Kant

There is a strong tradition of other regard within liberalist philosophy. Certainly morality was Immanuel Kant's main concern in his most famous work the *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*. Understood as taking a deontological or rule-based position, Kant essentially argues that morality should be independent of consequences, positing that certain actions are intrinsically morally right or wrong (Kant 1785). While liberty and equality were also important elements in Kant's philosophy, at the heart of his theory was his assertion that the rational mind was key to morality. Kant believed that morality was to be found only when we put to one side our life experience and emotions, which he refers to as inclinations, in order that we may be guided by the rational mind to access 'a priori principles' that come to us from 'pure reason' (p. 58). Kant does not explain adequately, in my opinion, how we come to understand through the use of pure reason what these a priori principles are. Suffice it to say that his philosophy is based on the assumption that these principles supply knowledge of the moral law. Kant proposes a test to ensure that our actions conform to moral laws; hence his formulation of the categorical imperative. It reads: 'I ought never to act except in such a way *that I can also will that my maxim should become a universal law*' (Kant 1785, p. 74). Paton (1948) explains Kant's thinking thus:

He holds that a man is morally good, not so far as he acts from passion or self-interest, but so far as he acts on an impersonal principle valid for others as well as for himself. This is the essence of morality; but if we wish to test the maxim of a proposed action we must ask whether, if universally adopted, it would further a systematic harmony of purposes in the individual and in the human race (p. 25).

The idea that there could be a test to assess whether we are making decisions on moral grounds is laudable. Kant wanted to formulate a system that would embed a morality that could be applied on a universal basis. Despite the notoriety of Kant's ideas, they have not been uncritically accepted. His enduring contribution, however, was to orientate people towards examining their decision-making through a moral rather than an individualistic prism.

## Mill

Another highly influential liberal philosopher who was principally other focused was John Stuart Mill. Mill's project in his seminal publication *Utilitarianism* was to argue that the decisions made by the state ought to be assessed in the context of the likely consequences

for all persons affected. Often the word happiness was used to refer to the ultimate outcome that Mill wished to effect; however, it was often viewed critically as being based in hedonism. Mill (1897) clarifies the kind of happiness to which utilitarianism refers as follows:

... the happiness which forms the utilitarian standard of what is right in conduct, is not the agent's own happiness, but that of all concerned. As between his own happiness and that of others, utilitarianism requires him to be as strictly impartial as a disinterested and benevolent spectator. In the golden rule of Jesus of Nazareth, we read the complete spirit of the ethics of utility. To do as you would be done by, and to love your neighbour as yourself, constitute the ideal perfection of utilitarian morality (pp. 24-25).

Mill's clarification of the type of happiness which he promotes within utilitarianism requires people to act as would a benevolent spectator, a position not dissimilar, I suggest, to Kant's call to assess decisions through the prism of the categorical imperative. Both required people to stand back and make assessments regarding the universal application of their decisions, in Kant's case, or to determine how their decisions would affect others, as well as the self, in the case of Mill. Unlike Kant's, however, Mill's perspective was one that embraced a collective notion of people. He says, as a way of encouraging a golden rule ideal, that

... utility would enjoin, first, that laws and social arrangements should place the happiness, or (as speaking practically it may be called) the interest, of every individual, as nearly as possible in harmony with the interest of the whole; and secondly, that education and opinion, which have so vast a power over human character, should so use that power as to establish in the mind of every individual an indissoluble association between his own happiness and the good of the whole ... (p. 25).

Mill wants people to recognise that it is not enough to simply view other people's happiness as being as important as our own; rather, we should link our own happiness with that of others, to the point where I cannot be happy when others are not. This is a concept that has been shown to have some merit in psychological terms, as was discussed in Chapter One. Mill wants us to aim for an ideal of universal happiness within which people are 'unable to conceive the possibility of happiness to himself' when their conduct is opposed to the overall good; rather, their direct impulses should act 'to promote the general good' (p. 25). This position promotes the kind of attitude that Maslow found in his subjects, and Fredrickson found improved her subject's mental wellbeing. Mill is right to suggest that an egalitarian outward view will over time become an habitual motive of action. It is true to say

that the more we take on this attitude the more we will absorb it into our being, eventually flavouring all of our actions and responses. The notion of equality is inherent in Mill's (1897) ideas; he states that 'the interests of all are to be regarded equally' (p. 47). He also says that growing up with egalitarian principles of equality renders people unable to later disregard the needs of others - a good observation. As I reported in Chapter Two, even children in infancy displayed empathy and care toward others when they had themselves been parented by a responsive and loving attachment figure. Once empathy is learned, it appears to become part of our interactional patterning. Mill's view is that people should cooperate with one another, as each is part of a collective, rather than people having individual and separate aims. He also advocates the strengthening of social ties and the healthy growth of society as a way of helping people connect, and thus identify with the good (Mill 1897, pp. 47-48). The individual whom Mill promotes is one who sees herself as intimately connected to others, with a collective persona and attitude. This attitude, Mill (1897) says, 'is the ultimate sanction of the greatest-happiness morality' which 'makes any mind, of well-developed feelings, work with, and not against, the outward motives to care for others (p. 50). There is no doubt, faced with the research I provided in Chapter Two, that Mill would choose to support the state taking a greater share of responsibility to ensure that infants were nurtured in the most favourable way. Mill's ideas have been keenly and often positively discussed within philosophical debates; however, their egalitarian focus is less and less evident in today's attitudes and social policies.

Where Mill encouraged people to feel they are part of a collective working toward a common purpose – happiness - Nozick encourages citizens to be as free as possible from the state and any demand it may make of them lest they be required to give unfairly of their resources. It is this attitude which is arguably gaining ground within Australian society. In a recent report released by the Community Council of Australia, the authors stated there had been a reduction in the generosity of the Australian population at large. They said that despite being

... above average compared to other OECD countries in equality of access to employment, education levels, and business confidence ... We volunteer less and give less as a percentage of our income than we did five years ago. We are slipping down the international corruption scale just as we are slipping down the scale of international generosity (Crosbie & Marjolin 2016, p. 9).

Given the authors of the report argue that this reduction cannot be related to decreases in income, we can only speculate about why such a reduction in civic engagement is occurring. Are we becoming more selfish? Are we more consumed than ever with the need to accumulate individual wealth? Nozick may not have thought his views were advocating selfishness, yet his emphasis on extreme individualism and advocacy of ideas such as the unfairness of having to provide for the undeserving, engenders a defensiveness of our situation, our privilege, and shows an extreme lack of empathy.

Fortunately, the majority of Western democracies do not take a Nozickian position on taxation. Most impose some form of taxation system upon their citizens, using varying formulae; however, each seeks to ensure that services, infrastructure, and the needy are supported by some kind of redistribution. Such systems generally acknowledge that some can afford to give more, while others require support. So while this seems to be evidence that most states have *not* adopted a Nozickian outlook, I hold that his ideas increasingly dominate. It could be argued that substantiation of this view is to be found in increasing levels of tax evasion found at the corporate level. Recently, when it was revealed by the media during the 2016 US election that the Republican candidate, Donald Trump, had not paid tax for many years despite his lavish lifestyle and owning a large business empire, rather than being remorseful he said, 'that makes me smart' (Sorkin 04/10/2016). A study published soon after Trump's revelation showed that many companies 'have managed to shelter trillions of dollars in profits offshore from being taxed' (Sorkin 04/10/2016). While it seems this kind of tax evasion is not illegal, if it were practised by all, or even by the majority, there would be no money to build or sustain any public infrastructure, social services or education initiatives, to name but a few instances of public spending. This attitude could therefore be viewed as morally bankrupt as those such as Trump who share that attitude apparently carry no guilt: they do not care that they are not contributing to Government coffers. How companies would justify this behaviour is cause for speculation, but one wonders if, at least in part, they justify their obvious tax evasion to mollify their deep seated Nozickian-style worry at being called a *sucker* if they were to give more in tax than they could get away with. In addition, some, such as lawyer, businessman, and former mayor of New York, Rudy Giuliani, say that, as long as it is not illegal, tax evasion is legitimate, even going so far as to say that Trump's tax evasion showed he was a "genius" (Reuters

02/10/2016). One can only assume that to claim so blatantly, even arrogantly, that tax evasion is a positive practice, sadly suggests that both Trump and Giuliani believed most people would respect their position on this issue. While many denounced their attitudes, Trump's popularity remained high, and he subsequently won the election. We can only take from this that many were not averse to the implications of Trump's disclosure.

Similarly, in a report of 11<sup>th</sup> July 2016 in the Australian news, George Rozvany, described as a veteran of the corporate tax industry, reported that the big four accounting firms were unethical, aggressive, and had perpetrated 'the greatest tax crimes in history' (Long 11/07/2016). Rozvany was reported to say:

At least \$US1 trillion in tax revenue is lost worldwide, and \$50 billion in Australia, as a result of aggressive tax minimisation schemes established by the four giant firms who audit the books of nearly all the world's major companies (Long 11/07/2016).

Worse still, Rozvany reportedly said that the big four 'work with government to deliver what they want for their clients. It's not set in a social context; it's designed to deliver an outcome for their clients' and added that 'the people who are most affected are the most underprivileged in our society, those without a voice' (Long 11/07/2016). I believe these outcomes are a far cry from the intent of liberalism's founders.

Therefore, it may be argued that at least the elites in Western society do not approach their daily lives through a Millsian lens, one that would see them moving around in a collective society where everyone's happiness would be factored into their decisions and activities. Nor do they take a categorical imperative approach, checking whether their decisions would meet a criterion that could be universalised; rather, we generally approach everyday decisions with the volition of a private, separate individual with no or little consideration accorded to others, except insofar as we stay within the law perhaps. Our approach to everyday decision making, I assert therefore, much more closely resembles a Nozickian position. Governments too are less likely it seems to evenly spread the capital they gain from collecting taxes from the mining of state resources and from goods and services taxes. An example of this was discussed in a recent Australian Council of Social Services (ACOSS) report. In their report on poverty, ACOSS stated that

We learnt recently that Australia has outperformed other OECD economies by achieving 25 consecutive years of positive economic growth. That is a formidable



achievement and one that is justifiably a source of collective pride. It means that someone born in 1991 now lives in a country where household disposable income is about twice the level it was when they were born, even after taking account of rising prices and population growth. The economic pie has grown substantially over the period, but many are still missing out ... (ACOSS 2016, p. 6).

Those missing out were reported to be the 13% of the population who live below the internationally accepted poverty line (ACOSS 2016). Indeed, ACOSS reported that 'Successive budgets have cut income support payments to those with the least, including low-income families despite persistent and increasing child poverty in Australia' (ACOSS 2016, p. 5). So, despite increasing overall wealth, the government of Australia has moved even further from the kind of ethos elucidated by Mill.

The private and political belief that capitalism has the answers to wealth creation has thus been reinforced; hence the need to continually increase production and consumption. Increases in production however are not in the first instance designed to meet the needs of people for work; rather, they grow individual wealth within business. As Kymlicka (1991) points out:

In the market-place, we view others merely as means to our enrichment. We produce things not to fulfil the needs of others, but as the only way to advance our interests. As the president of General Motors once said, his job wasn't to make cars, but to make money. ... he saw [others] needs as something he could exploit to further his interests and needs (p. 107).

This perspective, along with the kind of thinking that enables the likes of Trump to brag about tax evasion, promotes the idea that self-interest is what generates wealth creation, enshrining the idea that wealth creation equals success.

And success is what Western families want. Imagining that success, and the happiness that is assumed to be generated by a Nozickian style of individualism, tends to encourage parents to pursue their individualism and wealth creation as their highest priorities. At the same time, parents are usually blissfully ignorant of the neuroscientific evidence which would most likely advise that they not place their infants in childcare, but rather care for them themselves. With no formalized mechanism by which to inform parents of such evidence, governments too, it can be said, are complicit in failing to supply parents with information from which they more than anyone could benefit (a topic I will pursue at length in Chapter Seven).

While I am not saying that Nozick is personally responsible for many in society taking up extreme individualism, it is views such as his, as well as structures such as capitalism in particular, that have collectively led people and the state to embrace the kind of views exemplified by Nozick. Capitalism is the topic I will address next.

## **Capitalism**

Although capitalism is not directly viewed as an aspect of liberalism, although some think it ought to be (Connolly 1984), I will argue that its growth in tandem with the promotion of a Nozickian ideal has facilitated the acceptance of capitalism as the answer to wellbeing.

While I will not be providing a deep analysis of capitalism (as I am focusing only on aspects which relate to the claims of this thesis), I will examine and discuss Di Zerega's (Di Zerega 2001) and Kymlicka's views about its growth and influence. I will suggest that such an idea has seduced us into thinking that work, as the means to earning and thus wealth creation and power, is where happiness is to be found. Yet I have asserted, as Plato argued two and a half thousand years ago, that happiness cannot be found in wealth or the consumption of its goods. Psychological research has confirmed this view, as discussed in Chapter One; therefore I will argue that capitalism deepens the difficulty of orientating the state towards a position where it would positively respond to my normative claims.

Capitalism has developed from the idea that markets, along with people ought to be free of constraints. Di Zerega (2001) argues that capitalism and liberal democracy have developed from the kind of strengthening that liberalism has enabled through the 'intellectual, legal, economic and political status of individuals within society', and that these mechanisms have enabled 'peaceful persuasion rather than status, force, or its threat' (p. 755).

While Di Zerega's description of capitalism's evolution may be accurate, it has become over the decades a dominant force in society. Wood provides a straightforward description: capitalism, he states, is a 'market-based, commodity-producing economic system controlled by 'capital', that is, purchasing-power used to hire labour for wages' (Wood 2005, p. 125).

As I will detail later however, capitalism has become much more than that.

Wood (2005) explains that a central critic of capitalism, Marx, said that capitalism was not only responsible for a massive increase in productive output, but that

... capital has an inherent tendency to accumulate, concentrating social power in the hands of the capitalist class and bringing the exploited working class more and more under its economic domination (p. 125).

Despite the passage of time since Marx's ideas were published, these sentiments are more poignant than ever. Wood (2005) also explains that defenders of capitalism deny that wage labourers are exploited, citing the 'indispensable economic functions performed by capitalists, such as managerial and supervisory labour, saving, and the assumption of risks' (2005, p. 125). Notwithstanding these differences of opinion, there is no doubt that wealth has increasingly been concentrated in the hands of the few. In a recent Oxfam International report it was claimed that 'eight men own the same wealth as the poorest half of the world' (2017, p. 2). The report also discussed how big business, along with the super-rich, are driving the inequality crisis by 'paying as little tax as possible ... by using tax havens or by making countries compete to provide tax breaks', 'relentlessly squeezing down the costs of labour' - and frequently using 'their fortunes to help buy the political outcomes they want' (Oxfam 2017, pp. 3-5).

Certainly the lobbying of parliamentarians and the giving of donations to political parties by big business in Australia is substantial. In a recent ABC online news article, Ashlynne McGhee reported that donations may soon exceed 1 billion dollars.; however, she also explained that the amount may be 'triple' that figure as all donations under \$13,000 did not have to be declared (McGhee 7/12/2016). A check of the Australian Electoral Commission's website shows that these donations come from many sources such as banks, the mining industry, private individuals, and the manufacturing industry (Australian-Electoral-Commission 2017). While there is no proof that any of these donations do influence political decision-making, they appear to provide unfair access to politicians (Maxwell 2015).

The major problem remains that liberal states are not distributing equally the profits from businesses and industries that operate within their borders. Naqvi (2002) states that 'It has now been established that, even at the theoretical level, market-based solutions are generally neither efficient nor equitable ...' (p. 59).

Naqvi is right to highlight the social inequities that have developed along with growth of the markets. While Di Zerega (2001) has a more positive view of the markets, he does concede that they grew in ways the originators could not have foreseen. He states that

... liberal democracy and the market order are more the spontaneous institutional outcome of applying liberal principles than their intended result. Once established, they took on a life of their own. Later liberals confronted the challenge of justifying and harmonizing these institutions with the principles which helped give rise to them (p. 756).

I believe the markets do have a life of their own. As Di Zerega says, the original liberal principles 'had mostly addressed encounters at a human scale', but that this scale had been transcended, rising into giant businesses with mass production (p. 757).

Many citizens continue to be convinced (or seduced) by the media and parliamentary representatives to think that big business holds the keys to wealth creation, and that consuming is not only necessary for a healthy economy but is also the source of happiness. Certainly, in the West, we consume to greater degrees than ever. An Australian Bureau of Statistics document claimed a substantial increase in household consumption expenditure from the years 1960 to 2006 (Australian-Government 2007). It said that 'the magnitude of this real increase (152%) suggests that we enjoy a much higher standard of material wellbeing than we did in the early 1960s' (Australian-Government 2007). Further, in a paper released by the Australian Bureau of Statistics it was stated that

Growth in the net saving plus other changes in real net wealth per capita seen in the past decade continues the trend that began in the early 1990s. Since 1992-93, growth in net saving plus other changes in real net wealth per capita has consistently been positive, with the exception being the most recent financial year' (Australian-Government 2013).

We can take from this that Australians have readily adapted their behaviour towards increased spending with increasing disposable income, contributing to big business profits. Yet consuming, enabled by wealth creation as we discussed in Chapter One, does not of itself contribute to our happiness quotient. As Plato (380BC/1992) argued, happiness is not found in the pursuit of wealth, but in having internal balance or 'community of all three parts' of the soul (p. 118/442c ). Indeed, focusing on wealth creation, Plato asserts, can never be a recipe for happiness, as it is a signal that a part of the soul, the appetitive part, is unrestrained, and 'their desires are insatiable. For the part they are trying to fill', he says, 'is like a vessel full of holes, and neither it nor the things they are trying to fill it with are among the things that are' (p. 257/586b). Happiness studies, as I reported in Chapter One, in effect concur with Plato, that those with their main focus on wealth creation are less happy than

those who are primarily focused on relationships and living actively in the world (Sheldon et al. 2004).

Yet, to suggest that parents earn less and therefore consume less in order to nurture their own infants would seriously challenge the current Western political status quo. It would also challenge parents as their first and foremost expectation is that the state will implement policies which are likely to enhance their economic wellbeing, particularly when most are uneducated by the kind of data that has been revealed in infant neuroscience. Liberalism, as it stands in the West, is therefore unlikely to support the kinds of modifications that I have argued are necessary without substantial ideological shifts.

## **Conclusion**

In this chapter I have argued that, as the changes required to ensure children's optimal development have not been made, it is the responsibility of the state to act to appropriately support our infants' development. I argued therefore that it was necessary to investigate liberalism's attitudes to the kind of responsibility that state has for its citizens and their children. I examined the views of Archard (2003, 2015b), Austin (2007), and Richards (2010) who have examined and critiqued the state's role in regard to children. I argued that there were precedents set where the state has previously taken on a more extensive role in relation to children. Therefore, I argued, the state ought to take a greater role in both the education and support of parents to ensure the wellbeing of its future citizens.

I pointed out, however, that requiring the state to take on a greater role in ensuring infants receive the kind of care that will lead to their flourishing, arguably challenges modern views about privacy. Freedom of the individual is considered to be an essential aspect of the liberalist state, made manifest in the idea of boundaries between the public and private spheres. I examined these boundaries and looked at how they have affected our expectations of privacy provision, and I have critiqued their purpose. This discussion highlighted the tension that arises from calling for a more extensive use of state powers in regard to children. I concluded that the protections the private sphere supposedly requires are no longer warranted.

I also argued, however, that there has been a resurgence in the idea that the state should increasingly take a hands-off approach to its citizens. I argued that this view has been popularised by some political philosophers such as Robert Nozick (1974) who, I argue, is representative of the call for greater freedom from the state. I critiqued Nozick's views, which I stated overvalued individualism and autonomy. While individualism and autonomy have been a central concern of liberalism, I argued that Nozick's overemphasis and overrating of these aspects of liberalism have oriented Western society toward the belief that self-sufficiency and individual wealth accumulation are the greatest sources of happiness. This erroneous conception has not only led to a neglect of ideals such as the importance of human relationships and sense of community, but acted as a barrier to the kind of change that I am urging needs to take place. I argued that his views are largely at odds with past influential philosophers such as Emmanuel Kant (1785) and John Stuart Mill (1897). I briefly outlined some of Kant's and Mill's views, which I stated had a greater emphasis on moral concerns apparent in their other focus, an emphasis much less visible in society today.

Finally, I argued that a societal emphasis on individualism, tax minimisation and wealth accumulation has led to the idea that capitalism is the answer to wealth creation and thus human happiness. I reviewed some ideas on capitalism, suggesting that the power and influence it has concentrated in the hands of the few has resulted in a neglect of ideas such as the importance of human relationships and the value of a sense of community. The suggestion that happiness actually resides in psychological wellbeing, which is encouraged during the nurturing process when infants are loved by their primary attachment figure for the first three years of life, is challenging to the status quo. I conclude in this chapter that liberalism, as it is now understood in the West, does not recognise or value the psychosocial needs of individuals enough, and therefore it is unlikely that without substantial ideological change there will be support for the kinds of modifications that I have argued are necessary. This represents a fundamental problem which I will take up again in later chapters.

## ***Chapter 4 - Feminism & Motherhood***

At the heart of this thesis is the tension that exists between a parent's need to spend time with their infant and the need to ensure that a parent maintains their own autonomy. In the first chapter I outlined the dilemma, discussing the kinds of duties we have to our children. I argued that we have particular duties toward our children in order that they may have the kind of foundations in life that enable them to flourish - that is, to be happy, healthy, and productive citizens. In Chapter Two, I outlined the empirical evidence which suggests that it is mothers who are best situated to provide the primary care to their young infants, and thus spend the majority of their time with babies. With this evidence in mind I made the normative claim that mothers ought to spend at least the first eighteen months of their infants' lives providing the preponderance of care. At a time in Western history when women are actively pursuing their own autonomy to a greater degree than was previously possible, to suggest that it is women who should in effect forgo their autonomy in favour of spending most of their time with their infants appears as a retrograde step, in conflict with the prevailing expectations that women should return to work, compounding our dilemma. As this situation affects women in particular, it is appropriate that I investigate this tension through a feminist lens to see how feminism might deal with this issue, and ask whether it can offer a workable solution to the problem.

In this chapter I will argue that the development of feminism has rightly focused on the need to improve the status and autonomy of women. I will also argue that feminists have accepted the liberalistic ideals of individualism and autonomy on offer as the correct ideals for which to strive. These ideals were generally linked to the kinds of activities which men typically undertook, working and earning, activities which also conferred status and respect for men. Women rightly wanted these things associated with work too; hence women gradually turned away from their traditional roles in favour of the activities which they saw attracted status and respect – the activity of work. The assumption that work offered the pathway to status, respect, autonomy, and independence, however, has not proven entirely true – there have been unintended negative consequences. The first questionable assumption made by women was that the pathway to status and respect was to mimic the

way men conducted their lives. The second questionable assumption was that nurturing was of little value and that the identity of the person who undertook the caring for infants and children was inconsequential to those children.

In order to argue the case I am prosecuting, I will first discuss some issues that have contributed to the inferior status of women and the undervaluing of the roles they have typically undertaken in society. I will argue that negative evaluations of women in general have resulted in women wanting to de-identify from womanhood and reject their gender-associated roles. I will also investigate difference feminism, which argues that women should not have to fit into a male defined framework to gain status and respect.

I will then discuss attitudes towards motherhood, looking briefly at its history, primarily through the writings of Julia Kristeva (1985). I will then explore the literature of feminist writers Rich (1976), and Ruddick (1989) whose ideas primarily reject the negative appraisal of motherhood. I will argue that while these authors rightly identify that paternalistic structures as well as a lack of women's voices entering the public domain have contributed to the lack of status for women, their voices have been overshadowed by more dominant feminist voices which acted to deny difference. I will finally argue that, with feminism's lack of focus on the possible consequences for infants of their parents' return to work, during infancy in particular, it is fair to say that feminism cannot offer a workable solution to the dilemma at the heart of this thesis.

## **Feminism**

I will briefly outline some feminist history and discuss issues which have influenced many of our present day ideas and attitudes toward women. I will then examine some general feminist positions regarding women's status and explore how the movement sought to address power differentials that exist between women and men. The commonly held belief was that the solution to this power imbalance was for women to be unencumbered by domesticity and return to the workforce after having children. I will discuss this view, arguing that, while many of the solutions put forward, including the idea that women should return to the workforce and place children in childcare, have been helpful in advancing women and dismantling paternalism, others have unhelpfully entrenched negative views



about femaleness. I will investigate difference feminism, arguing that it does present a view which requires that traditional roles are respected and remunerated; however, that view has gained little traction.

The idea that women ought to have equality with men was not born with the advent of feminism. Indeed, Plato (380BC/1992) declared that 'Women share by nature in every way of life just as men do' (p. 129/455e), and thus he advocated that women who had the same attributes as guardian men, in particular, should have equal education and training as men (pp. 125-126/452a). This was a rare view however. As Midgley (1988) says, the ideal person in most philosophical deliberations throughout history was a man. She states that

From the ancient hierarchical point of view (unchanged from Aristotle to Kant and beyond) ... women themselves did not really matter. They were in effect an inferior kind of man, with no distinctive character of their own. They thus shared in the human condition to the extent that inferior men did ... (p. 30).

The idea that women were second rate versions of men, or were equal to inferior men, has been a pervasive view in society. An early attempt to change this assessment came from Mary Wollstonecraft. She wrote an influential piece called *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* in 1792 in which she endeavoured to address the injustice of women's position in society. Wollstonecraft argued that women were just as capable of exercising reason and virtue as men, but that they had been schooled to view themselves as incapable of little other than pleasing men (1792/1970, p. 51). Wollstonecraft states that

Asserting the rights which women in common with men ought to contend for, I have not attempted to extenuate their faults; but to prove them to be the natural consequence of their education and station in society. If so, it is reasonable to suppose, that they will change their character, and correct their vices and follies, when they are allowed to be free in a physical, moral, and civil sense. Let woman share the rights, and she will emulate the virtues of man; for she must grow more perfect when emancipated, or justify the authority that chains such a weak being to her duty (1792/1970, pp. 450-451).

Hannam suggests that Wollstonecraft and other feminist writers at the time were responding to Enlightenment writers who placed importance on 'universal human nature and the ability to reason', but did not include women, since most 'claimed that there were physical and intellectual differences between the sexes' (Hannam 2012, p. 11). This meant that, despite some voices to the contrary, women continued to be viewed as emotional, sensual creatures who lacked innate reason. In addition, 'Medical and scientific opinion was

used to support the view that social and cultural differences were natural, or biologically based, rather than socially constructed' (Hannam 2012, pp. 11-12). The idea that it was women's biological difference that could account for the so-called deficiencies in women has had a lasting and pervasive legacy. I believe it was in part responsible for women later treating all biological differences to men with negativity.

Women rightly rejected the notion of their inferiority. Placing his support behind a need to improve the status of women, John Stuart Mill wrote his now famous essay, the *Subjection of Women*, in 1869. He outlined how it was that men kept women in a state of subordination:

The masters of women wanted more than simple obedience, and they turned the whole force of education to effect their purpose. All women are brought up from the very earliest years in the belief that their ideal of character is the very opposite to that of men; not self will, and government by self-control, but submission, and yielding to the control of other. All the moralities tell them that it is the duty of women, and all the current sentimentalities that it is their nature, to live for others; to make complete abnegation of themselves, and to have no life but in their affections (Mill 1869/1989, p. 132).

The fact of women being raised for generations to believe they were obliged to abnegate themselves seeped into the psyche of women, and was pervasive. Even after women began to win the vote in early 20<sup>th</sup> century, however, and progressed to win unconditional rights in many European countries in the 1940s to 1960's, they still experienced restrictions to their social, political and economic positions (Hannam 2012, p. 76).

Yet there persisted a pervasive idea that women were generally happy. Hannam (2012) states that in 'non communist countries the image of the contented wife and mother, giving all her attention to housework, children and the care of her husband predominated' (p. 77). This image came to be 'increasingly at odds with the realities of women's lives in the late 1950s and 1960s', and, 'as young women took advantage of the opportunities offered by an expansion in higher education they were less content than their mothers to accept a future bounded by domesticity' (Hannam 2012, p. 78). An ongoing feminist's pursuit therefore has been to challenge this view that women were satisfied with traditional roles.

While feminists of the 1960s were beginning to gain some ground, with moves toward equal wages for equal work, they were still fighting hard to gain full equality in other domains.

They noted the problems associated with the shielding of the family from public view for instance where financial, power, and social inequities were still hidden, along with domestic violence (Held 2006, p. 12). Some feminists 'believed that the problem of social inequality could be solved institutionally if 'institutions' such as the family ceased to restrict the potential capacities of women' (Humm 2013, pp. 12-13). Hannam (2012) states that the family was often 'viewed as a key place of women's oppression' (p. 82). According to such views, inequality or disempowerment was clearly believed to be residing in the institution of the family. Unfortunately this suggested that it was a woman's spouse and children who were responsible for the continuance of paternalism in the family, placing women at odds with those in her own family.

Further, some feminist came to believe that the family was a paternalistic structure that could only be dismantled by women partnering other women. Johnston (1973) states

Until all women are lesbians there will be no true political revolution. No feminist per se has advanced a solution outside of accommodation to man. ... There's no conceivable equality between two species in a relation in which one of the two has been considerably weakened in all aspects of her being over so long a period of historical time (p. 166).

In this view, being heterosexual alone was to agree to willingly participate in a patriarchal system. Such ideas often placed feminists at odds with each other, leaving women who chose to enter marriage and have children in a conflicted position. Yet there was a pervasive view that, in order to have equality, women needed to reject gender difference. Midgley (1988) states that the thinking behind a rejection of gender was that 'women were as good as men because they were no different to men. They were effectively men but no longer inferior ones' (p. 30).

There was one way women could show that they had the same capacities as men, and that was to work. Betty Friedan (1983), in *The Feminine Mystique*, argued that the solution to women's unhappiness at home was to take up meaningful employment (Friedan 1983). And women did. Professional childcare also allowed women to choose work over the traditional role of 'housewife', enabling them to enter what had previously been a male domain. Inherent in this view of work, however, was the belief that autonomy as it was constituted in a liberalist account was the correct model. The assumption was twofold: that autonomy represented the ideal version of maturation, and that the things that are inherent in the

idea of autonomy – self-sufficiency and independence - represented important things to which women should aspire. The way to have these things, it was reasoned, was to return to work. Belief in this strategy also amounted to acceptance of the belief that *masculine* aspirations, or what were perceived to be masculine aspirations, were also rightly correlated with the possession of rational capacities. Women naturally wanted the kudos that was associated with working – the acknowledgement that they did possess rational capacities, that they could be autonomous, have status, and deserve respect. All of these things were only available, it seemed, if women rejected traditional female roles and followed men into work. This was according to Hannam (2012), a way to deconstruct the social construction of gender roles that had favoured men. However, in *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Centre*, hooks (1984) critiques feminist theory, singling out authors such as Friedman who she said had failed to recognise that they were basing their ideas from the point of view of a

... select group of college-educated, middle and upper class, married white women – housewives bored with leisure, with the home, with children, with buying products, who wanted more out of life ... She did not speak of the needs of women without men, without children, without homes. She ignored the existence of all non-white women and poor white women. She did not tell readers whether it was more fulfilling to be a maid, a babysitter, a factory worker, a clerk, or a prostitute, than to be a leisure class housewife (hooks 1984, pp. 1-2).

hooks had a point. Friedman was talking from a point of view that suggested that all women could choose meaningful work. While hooks states that while the ‘dilemmas’ of what she refers to as the ‘leisure class white housewives’ were real and warranted attention and change, ‘masses of women were concerned about economic survival, ethnic and racial discrimination etc’ (hooks 1984, p. 2).

Yet, other feminists believed that capitalism had a clear role in keeping women oppressed. Benston (1997) argues that the ‘structure of the family is such that it is an ideal consumption unit’ and a ‘valuable stabilizing force in a capitalistic society (p. 21). However, Benston (1997) argues that working outside the home does not equal liberation, rather she states

Equal access to jobs outside the home while one of the preconditions for women’s liberation, will not in itself be sufficient to give equality to women; as long as work in the home remains a matter of private production and is the responsibility of women, they will simply carry a double work-load (Benston 1997, p. 21).

Benston (1997) therefore advocates that work in the home needed to be changed from 'private production into work to be done in the public economy' (p. 21). Thus she states that 'this means that childrearing should no longer solely be the responsibility of the parents', but that society must take responsibility for children, and for other work to become part of the public sector, such as 'communal eating places and laundries for example' (pp. 21-22).

And despite the diversity of views within feminism, Hannam (2012) asserts there were several common elements that have continued to provide direction within the movement. She describes feminism as:

... a set of ideas that recognize in an explicit way that women are subordinate to men and seek to address imbalances of power between the sexes. Central to feminism is the view that women's condition is socially constructed, and therefore open to change. At its heart is the belief that women's voices should be heard – that they should represent themselves, put forward their own view of the world and achieve autonomy in their lives (p. 7).

Hannam's analysis explains the past and ongoing impetus behind the feminist movement. The power imbalances that have existed between women and men have been obvious to most, and needed changing. Hannam is right to say that women's voices should be heard, as they have clearly been missing from the public sphere. Women are also right to both demand and pursue their autonomy. There is however one aspect of Hannam's definition that I believe has been detrimental to how femaleness is viewed, the idea that women's roles have been socially constructed, a subject I will take up in the following section.

## **Difference feminism**

While feminists rightly argued for equality, and to no longer be viewed as inferior to men, the accompanying idea, that women were no different to men, in effect denied that there were in fact inherent differences between them. Carol Gilligan was one who argued that women differed from men significantly in the way they interpreted moral dilemmas. Her work challenged the empirical findings that women scored lower on moral development. Gilligan (1993) argued in her book, *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development*, that female moral development was not lacking; rather, that developmental theories were too narrow, failing to encompass a complete picture of human experience. Gilligan disputed developmental psychologist Kohlberg's findings that boys' moral reasoning was more sophisticated than that of girls. His scoring system focused on

justice reasoning and undercredited the caring ethic girls' were more likely to display. Gilligan's exploration of the differences in typical male and female responses to moral dilemmas led her to re-interpret what was taking place. She concluded that typical male responses came from an hierarchical stance, whereas female responses were based in an 'activity of relationship; of seeing and responding to need, taking care of the world by sustaining the web of connection so that no one is left alone' (1993, p. 62). Gilligan argued that women had a different voice; not an inferior voice. This idea that women have a tendency towards a different orientation, one toward responsibility, while men tend toward a morality of rights (Humm 2013, p. 219), was a controversial one, inside and outside of feminist groups. This led some to denounce Gilligan's position. Hirschmann (1999) states that 'Gilligan is generally seen as the Antichrist of rights talk, because care is seen as rejecting everything rights embody, such as universality, neutrality and impartiality' (p. 30). While critics of Gilligan argued that her ideas did not take into account the difference socialisation made to Gilligan's subjects, which may have accounted for the difference in moral outlooks (Baier 1995, p. 48), Gilligan later argued that the morality of responsibility is superior, and that the morality of hierarchy is deficient; therefore, if the way children are socialised makes a difference, then male children ought to be raised more like female children (Gilligan 2014).

Following Gilligan's ideas, some feminists rightly asked whether women should be seeking only to 'enter a world that was defined by men and shaped by male values'; others argued 'that women were different from men and that 'feminine' qualities should be valued in the public as well as in the private sphere' (Hannam 2012, p. 8). This perspective was called difference feminism. Although the term has had little currency, it is useful to review it in this context as I think the ideas behind it are worthy of consideration. It was a term used to differentiate it from equity feminism. Hirschmann (2007) states that 'equity feminism held to a liberal feminist line of equality as sameness' whereas difference feminists took the view that 'the world was defined by and for men and that women's attempt to "fit into" that male-defined framework would only perpetuate the problem of gender subordination...' (p. 149). Thus Hirschmann (2007) says that 'difference feminists claimed the notion of equality promoted by equity feminists did not allow for women's difference from men to be considered. (p. 149). Hirschmann (1999) says that some argued:

Difference should not be seen as providing an excuse to deny rights to particular individuals or groups, as has often been the case for women under (patriarchal) liberalism, which insists that women must either base their claims to equal rights on assertions of sameness with men or assert their differences by abandoning claims to rights. Rather, difference should be seen as an occasion for rights, as a signal light indicating times when rights are particularly at issue; it marks out occasions when misunderstanding and conflict may arise and indicates the possibility for appropriate state protection that rights afford (p. 30).

Hirschmann was right to argue that women should be respected for the different role they had typically undertaken in society, and that difference should be seen as an occasion for rights. This required the recognition of women's particularity - and respect for it.

Hirschmann (2007) explains:

In order to recognise women's particularity, equality had to be focused on substance and outcome rather than procedure, and institutions and practices needed to be restructured to include the ideals historically associated with women's work, such as care, nurturance, and relationship. Thus care work needed to be recognized as socially valuable and afforded resources such as financial compensation and social recognition (p. 149).

The view that care work needed to be recognised as socially valuable is entirely right. As Wollstonecraft argued, undertaking different roles does not make anyone less worthy of respect. I believe this view does address an important omission in the feminist debate, but it was heavily criticized on the basis that the roles for which women wanted recognition were roles they had no choice but to undertake as part of a paternalistic system (Hirschmann 2007, p. 149). I argue however that the difference feminist view is right because the inherent biological differences cannot be adequately argued away by saying that the differences in women's and men's roles are entirely due to paternalistic structures. There seems to have been a failure to acknowledge that there was, and still is, a major biological difference between women and men that has historically determined who stayed home to look after children and who went further afield to source resources for the family. Prior to the advent of formula milk, the only way babies could survive was to have regular access to their mothers to be breastfed, or to contract out breastfeeding to a wet nurse, a practice in which rich and poor engaged for a variety of reasons. This fact, along with all the other reasons women and their infants seek close proximity to each other (reasons I set out in Chapter Two, namely the hormonal cocktail that usually ensures mothers and their babies bond with each other), determined who would look after children. The roles women

typically found themselves undertaking in the modern world developed out of this fact. Women usually continued to care for children once they were beyond the age of breastfeeding, often because they were pregnant again and because it was pragmatic for women to continue this role and for men to continue undertaking theirs. It was the way these roles came to be viewed and approached that was socially constructed, however, not the role itself. It is the social construction that failed to afford status to, and respect for, the role that women undertook.

As Germaine Greer argued in *The Whole Woman* (1999), there is still an inherent prejudice toward femaleness. She states that

... femininity is still compulsory for women and has become an option for men, while genuine femaleness remains grotesque to the point of obscenity. Meanwhile the price of the small advances we have made towards sexual equality has been the denial of femaleness of any kind of a distinguishing character. If femaleness is not to be interpreted as inferiority, it is not to signify anything at all (p. 2).

Greer (1999) asked women and men to no longer deny but to embrace the difference in our genders. She says to women:

The female body is not our enemy but our strength; it is not our sex that confines us but the hatred and disgust of others for our sex. If we begin to share their contempt we are finished (p. 325).

I agree with Greer's view that sharing contempt of women's gender will not allow women to attract respect for their biological difference to men that leads to pregnancy, birth and breastfeeding, a respect that is essential if nurturing is to be valued and respected as legitimate worthwhile work. While imagining that some hold femaleness in contempt is to acknowledge an extreme view, there are constant reminders that women are still viewed as lesser beings by some. In 2014, one such example was comments made by the then Australian Treasurer, Mathias Cormann, in a verbal stoush over economic credentials when he called the opposition treasurer, 'an economic girly man' (News 2014). Cormann obviously intended to insult the opposition leader by referring to him as a girl.

Cormann's comment shows that, despite the seventeen years since Greer wrote about the societal rejection of femaleness, that there are many who consciously or perhaps even subconsciously hold women in less regard than men. How femaleness should be viewed, however, remains a vexed issue even within feminism itself, as I have discussed. Having said



that, the predominant attitudes in society appear to have ignored - or perhaps been oblivious to - such views. Women and men appear to have accepted that to have the kind of freedoms the liberal state suggests we ought to have, including our autonomy, women must return to work and place children in childcare. How these differing views have effected how motherhood is viewed is a topic I will turn to next.

## **Motherhood**

I have highlighted several aspects of feminism that have fostered a negative appraisal of women's roles, particularly that of motherhood. I will now turn to an investigation of motherhood itself. I will briefly recount Julia Kristeva's (1985) view of the history of the Western conception of motherhood, heavily influenced, she says, by Christian ideals of womanhood and set the stage for the impossibly good mother. I will also review Kristeva's ideas through the more recent writings of Chase and Rogers (2001), who also discuss the 'good' mother. I will then discuss the views of feminist writers Rich (1976) and Ruddick (1989) who wrote specifically about motherhood and railed against the negativity that was often projected onto this role. While they claim that the problems associated with motherhood were largely due to paternalistic systems, I will argue that the problems were exacerbated by some feminists' belief that the family was a place of oppression. I will argue that this has resulted in two things: in the first instance it led to the belief that thinking women who wish to gain or maintain their autonomy should not choose motherhood, or alternatively should choose work over caring for their children; and second, it reinforced the lack of value and respect associated with nurturing. I will argue that this lack of value has resulted in disunity between women and motherhood, sidelining the needs of infants. Finally, I will turn to some more recent authors and their discussions of contemporary motherhood issues.

## **Background**

In *Stabat Mater*, feminist author Julia Kristeva (1985) explored the reasons behind avant-garde feminists' rejection of motherhood. Kristeva said she believed they had rejected motherhood largely because they had accepted a popular but abhorrent idea about the meaning of motherhood. This view, she said, left them believing that motherhood was incompatible with a woman's ability to be an autonomous individual. She says they had unwittingly accepted an historically paternalistic Christian representation of the Virgin

mother Mary. The idea that a mother could remain virginal cemented the idea of 'the possibility of pregnancy without sex, wherein a woman preserved from penetration by a male conceives solely with the aid of a "third person" or, rather, non-person, the Spirit', From this arose the concept of 'immaculate conception', and hence Mary's freedom from sin (p. 136). Thus it could be argued that mothers fail at the first hurdle, evidence of a child being proof of her having had sexual intercourse (Kristeva 1985). It is not only the idea of sexual indiscretion that Kristeva discusses however. She also provides an account of other popularized and idealised notions of Mary. In the thirteenth century, following the writings of Blanche of Castille, Kristeva says that 'the Virgin explicitly became the focus of courtly love, combining the qualities of the desired woman and the holy mother in a totality as perfect as it was inaccessible' (1985, p. 141). In the same century, Saint Frances promoted 'representations of Mary as a poor, modest, and humble woman as well as a tender, devoted mother', this too becoming an entrenched idea (1985, p. 141). And so, Kristeva (1985) suggests, 'A woman has only two choices: either to experience herself in sex *hyperabstractly* ... so as to make herself worthy of divine grace and assimilation to the symbolic order, or else to experience herself as *different*, other, fallen' (p. 142). Either way, women were faced with an undesirable choice in their portrayal, and left with a legacy of unrepresentative notions of motherhood; thus, Kristeva says, it is easy to see why some women have come to reject motherhood. Kristeva's antidote to such impossibility in choosing motherhood was to call for mothers voices to be heard, voices offering a more realistic view of mothers and mothering. This would, Kristeva (1985) suggested, take account of an absent but vital human perspective, enabling the reformulation of motherhood (pp. 151-152). Despite Kristeva's call for change Chase and Rogers (2001) feel that the pressure Kristeva speaks of to be the ideal mother is still prevalent. They state that we 'all know the ideal of the good mother. Above all, she is selfless' (p. 30). Chase and Rogers (2001) go on to identify other markers they believe are associated with ideas about the ideal mother. They state

Although the good mother ideal is depicted in terms of what she does, it embodies certain unspoken assumptions about who she is. It is rarely said out loud that the good mother is a white, able-bodied, middle, upper-middle, or upper class, married heterosexual, but that is what the ideal conveys (p. 31).

Having identified these characteristics of the good mother, Chase and Rogers ask 'if mothers who fit those characteristics feel the pressure of the good mother ideal, how much more pressure do those mothers feel who are not so privileged?' (2001, p. 31). They identify and discuss three groups of women who often they say come under particular scrutiny; lesbian, drug affected, and teen mothers.

Another feminist author who defended motherhood in the face of its negative portrayal was Adrienne Rich (1976). In *Of Woman Born: Motherhood as Experience and Institution*, Rich provides a detailed personal account of her conflicted experience of motherhood. She says that while motherhood enabled her to fully embrace her biological need for mothering and achieve closeness to her children, it was carried out under a patriarchal structure and therefore invariably under male control (1976, p. 13). Her call too was to dismantle paternalistic structures.

Subconsciously buying into the negative rhetoric about womanhood, Ruddick (1989) confesses in her book *Maternal Thinking* that, as a younger woman, having submerged herself in philosophy, she rejected the idea of taking a 'woman as a model' and feared that in a weak moment she might 'turn "womanly"' (p. 5). Rejecting the roles with which your gender is associated was not confined to students of philosophy however, as it was not uncommon in the 1980s, and is still pervasive today. In effect, women had the equivalent of a 'cultural cringe' toward their gender because it was associated with traditional roles that women felt they needed to reject in order to be viewed as equal to men. When Ruddick (1989) did freely choose motherhood, she became increasingly aware of the paradox that surrounds mothering, particularly the suggestion which was pervasive at the time, that to have children and become a mother was to be a victim, yet she was enjoying full-time motherhood. She began therefore to dissect the ideas that lay behind the negative appraisal of motherhood, realising that many of the so-called sacrifices associated with it were not intrinsic to the role, and was offended that it was so negatively portrayed. She states:

In many societies, the ideology of motherhood is oppressive to women. It defines maternal work as a consuming identity requiring sacrifices of health, pleasure, and ambitions unnecessary for the well-being of children. These are not sacrifices intrinsic to maternal work and indeed they are often balanced, even in impoverished or oppressed groups, by the pleasures children bring in tolerably good times. To suggest that mothers, by virtue of their mothering, are principally victims is an egregiously

inaccurate account of many women's experience and is itself oppressive to mothers (p. 29).

Ruddick's ambition, like Rich's before her, was to correct the inaccurate negative views associated with motherhood. She was rightly annoyed at the notion that to take on motherhood was to be a victim. Women do choose motherhood every day, and to suggest that all of them are doing so under some kind of duress, or because they are uneducated or uninformed, is an insult. Ruddick strongly defended her right to choose motherhood, yet she also understood why women would reject motherhood, as it was seen as valueless. Ruddick (1989) provides an account of a 1975 survey which measured the value of varying positions. She said that the survey ascribed the same value to nursery school teachers, nurses, child carers, and foster mothers as it ascribed to chicken offal shovelers and mud mixer helpers (p. 33).

Ruddick defended and advocated for the importance of maternal work, because of what it could provide children. As Ruddick (1989) contends, it is important work that has been shaped by the vulnerability of our offspring. She states that

As a species, human children share prolonged physical fragility and therefore prolonged dependence on adults for their safety and well-being. ... This universal need of human children creates and defines a category of human work (p. 18).

This category of human work Ruddick (1989) goes on to describe as maternal work. She says that

Preserving the lives of children is the central constitutive, invariant air of maternal practice; the commitment to achieving that aim is the constitutive maternal act. The demand to preserve a child's life is quickly supplemented by the second demand, to nurture its emotional and intellectual growth (Ruddick 1989, p. 19).

Yet, it is the need that infants have to be nurtured, a need which is generally met by mothers, that some feminists believe to be unfair. However, such a view fails to consider that it is not only infants who gain from the biological arrangement that necessitates mothers being with their infants; the emotional richness of such experiences can enhance both mothers' and infants' lives, as Ruddick points out. Although Ruddick in particular has advocated the benefits to both parents and infants of their close bond, the emphasis in her writing was on the benefits to women. With the exception of Ruddick, most feminists have not addressed the consequences for children of the change in who it is that is undertaking

their care. Nor have most addressed the fact that pregnancy, birth, breastfeeding, and bonding with babies can transform women's lives positively.

One of the few people who focused on infant's psychological wellbeing was attachment theorist Bowlby, but he was under fire from feminists who accused him of wanting women to remain in their subordinate roles to men. As Duschinsky, Greco and Solomon (2015) recount:

... research on attachment is widely regarded in sociology and feminist scholarship as politically conservative – oriented by a concern to police families, pathologize mothers and emphasize psychological at the expense of socio-economic factors' (p. 173).

Yet other feminists accused Bowlby of using biology to justify a patriarchal, father-absent society, while still others declared that the 'family structure which Bowlby implicitly advocates, with strong, closely bonded mothers and children, and peripheral fathers, fits the needs of modern capitalistic society' (Holmes 1993, p. 47). In short, attachment theory was marginalised, and its salient message about an infant's need to grow and develop in the presence of a loving attachment figure, in order that they developed emotionally well, failed to be heard. This has resulted in a loss of the idea that connection, growth, and love are received by *both* parent and child, and has worth beyond any care that non-attachment figures can deliver.

## **Motherhood Today**

Despite the 40 or so years since Kristeva, Rich, and Ruddick wrote in order to elevate the role of motherhood, I suggest it has not grown in esteem. Rich (1986), Ruddick (1989), and to some extent Kristeva (1985), also argued for the dismantling of patriarchy in order to facilitate positive change. While we cannot say that patriarchal society has dissolved in the West, we could say that it has lost some of its strength. We can also say that positive steps have been taken in making gains for women, for instance, in a greater proportion of women being in the workforce; equal wages for equal work; more women in positions of power; and greater access to childcare; however, women are just as conflicted, if not even more conflicted, about the mothering role as they were 40 years ago. Pervasive in the debate has been the call for women to return to work. An early call was made by Freidan (1983), as I stated in a section above, but Freidan argued for women's return to work at a time when it

was usual for a woman, once having had children, *never* to return to work. She wrote at the beginning of the 1960s when women were expected to make a career out of having children and managing a home for their husbands and children - for the entirety of their lives post-children. This was also a time when 'housewife' was the title given to such women. Friedan (1983) says that such women were told by society that they had it all, and should be happy. She cites a common view:

The American housewife – freed by science and labor-saving appliances from the drudgery, the dangers of childbirth and the illnesses of her grandmother. She was healthy, beautiful, educated concerned only about her husband, her children, her home (p. 18).

Belying this public persona of women, Friedan (1983) witnessed the growing malaise of women, dreadfully dissatisfied with their lives. Friedan (1983) said that for many years women couldn't understand their own discontent, feeling ashamed to admit it. She said that women's concerns were 'dismissed by telling the housewife she doesn't realise how lucky she is' (p. 24). Women's malaise was blamed on the fact that women had been educated and encouraged to seek independence and equality, which supposedly made them unfeminine. Meanwhile, Friedan says, 'Many suburban housewives were taking tranquilizers like cough drops (p. 31), and women were encouraged 'to ignore the question of their identity' (p. 71). Rightly, Friedan called for women to find their own purpose in life, arguing that it could be found in work, 'not merely as biological survival, but as the giver of self and the transcender of self, as creator of human identity and human evolution' (p. 333). As Maslow found in his subjects, finding self-fulfilment and purpose in life was an essential component of flourishing. Friedan was entirely right to suggest that women needed to find purpose outside the home. She states that

Women and men can only find their identity in work that uses their full capacities. A woman cannot find her identity through others – her husband, her children. She cannot find it in the dull routine of housework. ... If women do not put forth, finally, that effort to become all that they have it in them to become, they will forfeit their own humanity (p. 336).

Friedan was not taking a superficial look at work; she was evaluating what would make up a meaningful life, arriving at a similar conclusion to Maslow, as discussed in Chapter One. Friedan was asking where a meaningful life was to be found - and it was not to be found in devoting oneself to another for the whole of one's adult life. While women, fifty or more

years on, no longer face the pressure to stay home to parent full-time for the duration of their adult lives, Maushart (2000) argues in *The Mask of Motherhood*, that the identity crisis women face when they became mothers that Friedan had articulated in 1963 is 'precisely the same today' (p. xi). Maushart identifies that there is a 'mismatch between expectation and experience, between what we ought to be managing and how we do manage – remains as painful and as intractable as ever' (2000, p. xi).

Generally however, mothers have careers and pursue meaningful activities outside the home, whether they take some time out of the paid workforce or not. While the circumstances that generated Friedan's call for women to return to work have vastly changed, as Maushart points out, women still face an identity crisis. In part I suggest, because the idea that to stay home was to have a life devoid of purpose seems to have remained. In *The Price of Motherhood*, Crittenden (2001) says that although motherhood is often referred to as the most important job in the world it still carries no value. She states that

... the material contribution is still considered immaterial. All of the lip service to motherhood still floats in the air, as insubstantial as clouds of angel dust. On the ground, where mothers live, the lack of respect and tangible recognition is still part of every mother's experience (p. 2).

So while raising children is considered valuable the act of mothering still carries no value. Further, LaChance Adams and Lundquist (2013) state that 'Some contemporary feminist philosophers have also considered women's responsibility for children as a problem to be solved' (p. 4). Yet, LaChance Adams and Lundquist identify another societal inconsistency that results in women's vexed feelings toward motherhood. They state 'A mother who is educated in feminism might see her problem as evidence for something else, namely, a society that values childrearing only insofar as it does not impede worker productivity' (2013, p. 8). These perspectives often result in women feeling ambivalent about motherhood. Takseva (2017) argues that the reason women often feel ambivalent is that typical ideologies of motherhood still carry the idea that mother love is 'unproblematically selfless, unconditional, and a source of continuous joy' (p. 152). She says that ideas of motherhood ought to accept that ambivalence about motherhood is normal rather than unspeakable. She states

Most mothers likely love their children and find great and sometimes unique fulfillment in that emotion, but many mothers identify their love in more qualified terms: children are a source of joy for them, although not a continuous one, and selflessness and unconditionality, although significant parts of that love, are not always unproblematic (Takseva 2017, p. 152).

However, as Takseva discusses the 'study of maternal ambivalence in relation to mother love still appears marginal to mainstream discussions' and is 'still often constructed in the context of pathology rather than healthy mother–child relationships' (p. 153).

Another author who speaks of ambivalence is LaChance Adams (LaChance Adams 2014). She investigates in her book *Mad Mothers, Bad Mothers, and What a Good Mother Would Do*, what the reality is behind maternal love, rejecting the glossy idea of 'maternal love' rather detailing its complexity and the ambivalence many women feel about motherhood (p. 4). LaChance Adams says that her claim is 'that clashes between mother and child frequently act as a rupture within the woman herself between her competing desires to nurture and to be independent' (2014, p. 6). She states

Maternal experience challenges the assumption that subjectivity is singular and reveals that the ethical draw of another can disrupt one's sense of self-coherence. Such conflicts are not unique to motherhood, but are especially intense because of the child's dependence and vulnerability, societal expectations of women (such as their being primarily responsible for children), the shared embodiment between mother and child, and our society's systematic neglect of caregivers and their dependents (pp. 6-7).

LaChance Adams as well as Takseva are right to raise such difficult issues surrounding motherhood and the entrenched problems which are undeniably linked to the role. They are issues which I try to address in Chapter Seven on policy issues, as without a greater level of support the issues which facilitate the difficulties these authors speak of will continue to accompany motherhood.

Despite the difficulties which appear to be inherent in motherhood today, I am nonetheless advocating in this thesis not that women should eschew careers and meaningful activities outside the home, but that when they take time out from their careers during the infancy period of their child's life to undertake maternal work that this ought to be experienced as a natural and straight forward aspect of their lives. To take some time out should not have to have a detrimental affect on women's careers, nor should it lead to dependency, ambivalence or criticism. How this might be achieved will be addressed in Chapter Seven.



While there are growing numbers of women's voices being heard in the public domain these days, they are typically not the voices of mothers who have decided to take time out of the paid workforce. The women's voices we do hear are usually the voices of middle-class, privileged women in positions of power, advocating a position that appears to disregard the needs of infants. An Australian example of such a voice was heard in a statement made on an Australian current affairs and news analysis television program when high profile businesswomen, Yolanda Vega, Executive Director of the Australian Women Chamber of Commerce and Industry, argued for an increase to childcare availability because, she said 'if women can't earn, they can't spend. If they can't spend, the economy suffers and our children and communities pay the highest price' (Vega 25/07/2013). The following year in a news program Kate Carnell, the then Chief Executive of the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, and former liberal politician regularly interviewed on issues pertaining to women, argued for increased access to childcare because, she said, 'we need to get women back to work and into the productive economy' (TheDrum 13/5/14). This implied that women who choose to stay home to parent their infants are not being productive, and that the only way to be productive is to be directly involved in a wage-earning role. It also implies that women need to be cajoled to think about returning to work, as though women often don't understand what is in their best interests. Both Carnell and Vega's comments sounded as though they were prosecuting an economic agenda. They also displayed a lack of understanding of the needs of infants, and of how fundamentally important it is for their development to be nurtured by an attachment figure. This attitude commodifies infants, who will, in most cases, need to be placed in institutions on a daily basis so that their nurturers can get on with the job of earning, spending, and consuming. Such views also perpetuate the myth that there is no or little value in the act of maternal nurturing. Their comments show that both fail to understand how much a woman's life can be enhanced by the act of nurturing for a portion of their lives. Finally, they also imply that women can take children in their stride, simply having them then getting back to work, as though having children need not take up much of their time – indeed, having it all, something that Greer argued is impossible to achieve and with which I agree. With a perpetuation of such views, however, the value associated with staying at home with infants is likely to stay low, and, so long as there is little perceived value and status in motherhood,

the more families are likely to place their children in childcare, with apparently little understanding of its possible effect on their infants.

While the comments of Carnell and Vega strongly urge new mothers to return to work – a pressure that I believe is all too apparent - Sanger (1999) believes pressure is on mothers *not* to return to work. Sanger (1999) says there is an ideological belief in society that women shouldn't work as they 'remain responsible for the negative consequences for children of anything that can be attributed to their working ...' (p. 101). She is right insofar as any negative behaviours, which can reveal themselves as children grow older, are invariably blamed on the mother rather than on fathers or society at large. This is usually the case whether they undertake paid work or not. Nonetheless, she says: 'Today it is the mother's decision to leave her children that requires an independent mind, strong will, and courage' (p. 100). What Sanger appears to be saying is that women need to find courage in the face of pressure to stay at home, as they fear causing harm to their children if they return to work. In suggesting that it takes courage to leave an infant in the care of others, however, implies that women should ignore their biological urge to nurture their infants, and dismiss any information that may suggest babies might benefit from the secure attachment acquired through the mother's presence. Sanger also assumes that a mother's return to work will have no negative consequences for the infant, or, if there are such consequences, the needs of the mother have greater importance. This view suggests that, as Carnell and Vega aver, there is no relationship between the type of caring arrangements that are made for infants, and who undertakes such care. Their views also situate the mother in opposition to the needs of her infant.

The idea that children create the problem for their mothers – that indeed there is some oppositional relationship between their existence and their parents' needs - seems abhorrent. Nevertheless, I suggest it is the inevitable conclusion to reach when viewing the family as the key place of women's oppression, as we discussed earlier. Yet children are only ever the consequence of parental activities and decisions. I suggest then, rather ironically, that as women asserted their own needs in response to marginalisation by a patriarchal society, feminism was in a sense doing the same to children. Archard (2003) also argues for such a position. He claims that while feminists asserted that philosophy largely wrote women out of the story, and 'assimilated [them] into the household whose head is male',

much the 'same kind of complaint can be made on behalf of children' (p. xi). It may be rightly argued that children are just as much the responsibility of their fathers as of their mothers; however, while women returned to the workforce, neither mothers nor fathers took on an advocacy role for children, leaving children powerless in the face of any parental decisions that may have resulted in negative consequences. One can only assume that the lack of focus on outcomes for children arose because no-one imagined the possibility of negative consequences from placing children into childcare. We have tended to focus purely on children's physical growth, not imagining that there were possible negative, psychological outcomes on children's wellbeing in the absence of their attachment figures. While, as I have previously discussed, there are indicators that show we are beginning to have an increased awareness of the psychological needs of infants, with ever louder calls for women to utilise childcare and return to work there is little attention given to what a lack of psychological wellbeing may indicate. Women's focus needed to be turned to their own plight and their need for independence and autonomy, yet this has served to exclude awareness of how decisions made in recognition of their needs could impact upon their infants. Men's focus has remained where it has always been – on their careers and their earning.

Feminism has no doubt - and rightly - delivered great benefits to women over many years. Feminists have highlighted and sought to dismantle the paternalistic structures which have contributed to women's inequality. Feminism has, for example, yielded women the vote, provided equal wages for equal work, and given them access to mortgages and superannuation. Feminism has also highlighted inequities in women's representation in governance, in sporting wages and participation, as well as highlighting power imbalances in the home. Additionally, feminists have rightly fought for women to have avenues enabling a return to work after having children. Unfortunately, in the process of gaining much ground, there have been two significant issues many feminists have failed to consider. The first is their failure to attract status and respect for those roles seen as traditional female roles, such as nurturing. The second is their failure to focus on the outcomes for infants when both parents return to work while children are still in their infancy - and thus their failure to understand how the lack of intimate one-to-one nurturing with a loved attachment figure may affect infants.

Therefore, paternalism has not been the only contributor to the negative view of motherhood. Feminist views which have characterised equality as sameness have essentially ensured that traditional female roles have no higher status than they had prior to the beginning of the feminist debate. The view which promotes sameness has predominated, not just within feminist debates but in society at large. And the dominant solution to women's need for autonomy remains the use of childcare. I can only conclude therefore that feminism cannot, as a major contributor to the kinds of ideologies we adopt in the West, offer a pathway through the dilemma: it cannot resolve the conflict that is so apparent between our belief in the need for women to return to work for their own sakes, and the needs of their infants, as discussed in Chapters One and Two.

## **Conclusion**

I began this chapter by outlining why it is necessary to investigate the second influential ideological concept we live by – feminism. I briefly outlined some historical feminist background to highlight several issues which have contributed to many of the historical ideas we hold about women and the traditional roles they have undertaken. This, I asserted, was useful to our understanding of what has contributed to the low status of women in society. I argued that the negative evaluations of women and their traditional roles, particularly those within the family, resulted in women wanting to de-identify from womanhood in order to gain equality in a paternalistic society. I then outlined more recent feminist ideas which have challenged the liberalist idea of the private and public domains, ideas which enabled domestic violence, for instance, to continue 'behind closed doors'. I outlined how feminists have also demonised domesticity, even implicating the family itself as one of the institutions restricting the potentialities of women. I also discussed a feminist view which suggested that the solution to the increasing discontent women had in the home was to return to work. This solution has been viewed as a panacea, for women's discontent at being confined to the home, and also as a means of achieving their freedom and autonomy.

I asserted that the way many arguments have been couched has persuaded women to accept that men's roles in society offered the correct model of autonomy and self-sufficiency; thus, if women wanted these things, they would need to adopt what were

typically male roles, and thus fit into a male-defined framework. This view left what had been viewed as female roles even more diminished and valueless. It also denied women's biological differences to men, those differences which ensure women undertake a very specific role – to carry a pregnancy, give birth, and to breastfeed. Hannam (2012) argued that an accepted aspect of the definition of feminism is that women's traditional roles have been socially constructed, but I rejected this view; rather, I argued that there is a lack of recognition that, in large part, women's roles have been biologically determined, requiring recognition of their value to society. As such they ought to be acknowledged and respected. I also discussed Greer's (1999) view that, while women have made small advances toward sexual equality, there has been a price to pay - the denial of femaleness. Despite Greer's fame, her views have been overshadowed by the predominant feminist view which appears to claim female sameness.

I then investigated motherhood more specifically, looking at its history through the eyes of feminist writer Kristeva (1985) who asserts that Western ideas of motherhood have been firmly embedded in an old Christian view. I then examined the views of Rich (1976) and Ruddick (1989) who wrote in reaction to the view that motherhood was incompatible with a woman's sense of autonomy, and sought to give voice to the 'real' experience of mothering; however, views such as theirs, I argued, have not resonated within feminism, and have been sidelined. Moreover, I asserted that they have been sidelined by more dominant views such as those expressed by two prominent, public, female figures who urged women to return to work. I argued their views displayed indifference to the possible needs of infants, perpetuating the myth that there is less value in the act of maternal nurturing than there is in earning and consuming.

I concluded that feminism has rightly resulted in much progress toward women's equality. I posited that the need of women to gain status, however, led them to reject traditional female roles in favour of paid roles which carried status. I argued that this has led to a rejection and negative evaluation of traditional roles, particularly the role of motherhood. This has reduced even further the status and respect which ought to be accorded the role. And while women were encouraged to focus on their own needs, this left no-one focusing on the needs of children, and no-one attending to the possible effects of new care arrangements on infants. As I have shown, there are some infant needs that can only be

supplied by a loving attachment figure who is able to have loving, frequent, one-to-one interaction with the infant during the day. Although some feminists have tried to reclaim status and respect for maternal work, their voices have been marginalised by the more dominant voices which essentially argued for equity through sameness. I therefore claim that feminism, while rightly highlighting the needs of women, has contributed to a lack of respect for and acknowledgement of motherhood and what it can deliver, and has also contributed to the lack of acknowledgement of the needs of voiceless and vulnerable infants.

## ***Chapter 5 - An Ethic of Social, Emotional, and Moral Wellbeing***

In Chapter One I concluded that flourishing represents the optimal human state, equating with high order wellbeing. In Chapter Two I outlined neuroscientific research which shows that nurturing techniques can establish important neural patterning within the infant's brain which will either support or detract from their ability to become flourishing individuals. I also stated that institutional childcare can stymie the ability of infants to grow the facilitative neural circuitry required for healthy brain functioning. I then made two normative claims – the first controversially stated that mothers ought to stay home with their infants for at least the first eighteen months of their infant's life. The second was that the state ought to provide parents with both the neuroscientific evidence which can enable them to learn the best nurturing practices, and ought to provide the financial, social and emotional supports parents need to deliver nurturing well. In Chapters Three and Four I examined whether liberalism or feminism could provide any resolution to the dilemma that exists for parents between their need to exercise their autonomy and their responsibility to meet the needs of their infants. I concluded that both contributed in major ways to the dilemma, while both also offered some conceptual clarity, which I will go on to discuss.

In this chapter I will offer a resolution to the foundational dilemma of this thesis. I will begin by utilising and expanding on Carol Gilligan's (1993) original explorations into the differences between the strategies used by females and males to approach moral dilemmas,

and synthesising these with attachment theory, happiness, and infant neuroscientific data. I will argue that this naturally expands the ethics of care into an ethic of social, emotional, and moral wellbeing. This chapter challenges some of the issues associated with liberalistic and feminist ideas which tend to predominate in the West which were discussed in Chapters Three and Four. The heart of care ethics proposes that happiness and wellbeing cannot be found in individualism and self-sufficiency; rather these states are achieved through having an interdependent orientation to life. While such an orientation can be developed during one's adult life with hard work and dedication to changing emotional patterning, it is most readily developed during infancy through attachment parenting. I will argue that, not only does attachment parenting advantage infants, it also offers an opportunity to increase parental autonomy through the intimate interactions parents share *with* their infants.

I will first discuss the development of the ethics of care and its central concepts. Held (2006) states that there are several main features of the ethics of care. I will explore these features as I believe they are a good place to begin, though I will also point out some limitations to them. I will then turn to Slote (2007), who argues that there is a need for a broader discussion around the concept of empathy and respect within the ethics of care. I will then outline Gilligan's most recent ideas in which she claims that contemporary scientific data that identifies markers of health, such as independence, is on the wrong track; these markers of health are actually a sign of moral injury.

I will next examine an alternative view of autonomy. Influenced by concepts which emanated from the ethics of care, this view is predicated on the idea that we are first and foremost interdependent beings. It is able to show that liberalist notions of autonomy do not offer an ideal for maturation. I will argue that there are some limitations to the original concept of this alternative autonomy which can be improved by Gilligan (2014) and Slote's (2007) ideas. I will suggest that the application of a Millsian-like approach can support an even further expansion of the ultimate social being, reflective of what it is to have higher level wellbeing. I call will call this social autonomy.

Finally, I will briefly look to the family and the pressures to which it is currently subjected. I will argue that when the ethic of social, emotional, and moral wellbeing is understood, and when families can see that the liberalist notion of autonomy is far from the ideal model of

maturation, they will understand that they have been working to an erroneous ideal, one that cannot offer them the happiness they seek. When families recognise that social autonomy offers a new perspective that represents a *truer* standpoint on human wellbeing, they will understand the value and importance of attachment parenting, and then understand that staying home to nurture their infants full-time does not diminish their autonomy, but enhances it.

## **Ethics of Care**

In Chapter Four I briefly introduced Carol Gilligan's (1993) ideas which challenged the prevailing view that a female's ability to resolve moral dilemmas was, inferior to that of males. Her discussion highlighted and stimulated discussion around women's caring approach to moral dilemmas, which she outlined in her book, *In a Different Voice* (1993). I will briefly delineate Gilligan's main ideas, and then outline the ethics of care inspired by her view (Slote 2007). I will examine and critique Virginia Held's (2006) analysis of the ethic of care as I believe Held's treatment provides a well-developed and representative view of the ethic. While care ethics contains some ideas that are useful to this project, I will suggest it can be developed to a greater degree in order to make use of its main concepts.

Gilligan's (1993) research showed that, while males judged moral dilemmas on principles of justice, females tended to evaluate moral dilemmas through the lens of relationship to others (p. 62). Gilligan (1993) concluded that typical male responses came from an hierarchical stance, whereas typical female responses were based in interconnection. Gilligan (1993) said her aim was to transpose an unstable and 'morally problematic' hierarchy of principles into a principle where the image of a web of interdependent beings was foremost (p. 62). Gilligan's ideas highlighted the view that little credibility had been ascribed to one of the greatest realities of human existence: that we live in connection *with* each other far more than we live in independence *from* each other. Gilligan (1993) states that

The most basic questions about human living – how to live and what to do - are fundamental questions about human relations, because people's lives are deeply connected, psychologically, economically, and politically (p. xiv).



The way Gilligan answers the ‘most basic question’ differs greatly from the way in which those regarded as typical of many philosophers answer it; they often centred their discussion on the importance of the rational mind. Gilligan’s answer was located in a more obvious place – in our relationships (1993, p. xix); thus, she challenged the suggestion that independence was the epitome of ambition for moral beings, as liberalism appeared to argue.

The suggestions that women may think differently from men, and that the way humans live in relation to each other should be recognised as highly significant, were to inspire the development of the ethics of care (Slote 2007). Early to articulate the theory was Nel Noddings (1984). In her view, men’s approach to ethics had generally been expressed ‘in the language of the father’, where it was detached and discussed in terms of ‘justification, fairness and justice’ (p. 1). Noddings (1984) suggested that the voice of the mother was missing, a voice typified by ‘human caring and the memory of caring and being cared for’ (p. 1). Whereas Jaggar (1995) contends that care thinking emphasises

... its responsiveness to particular situations whose morally salient features are perceived with an acuteness thought to be made possible by the carer’s emotional posture of empathy, openness, and receptiveness (p. 180).

Such ideas have remained at the centre of the ethics of care. Perhaps though, the most valuable contribution to philosophy is that it calls into question the belief that rational man and it’s bedfellow the contractual society are to what we ought to aspire, and what ought to inform principles of justice (Held 1993).

Virginia Held (2006) explained in detail and expanded on the ethics of care in *The Ethics of Care: Personal, Political, and Global*, stating that the application of the ethic could fill out the missing components in other moral theories. She argued that it could either be cast as a separate, female-oriented ethic or be incorporated into a realignment of existing moral theory.

Held (2006) discusses several characteristics that she says are features of the ethics of care. The first firmly focuses on those for whom we take responsibility. Held says that ‘the ethics of care recognises that human beings are dependent for many years’ of their lives on others, and that ‘human progress and flourishing hinge fundamentally on the care that those

needing it receive' (2006, p. 10). This, she says, also 'stresses the moral force of the responsibility to respond to the needs of the dependent', who may in some instances need care for the duration of their lives (2006, p. 10). Noddings (1995) also discusses a moral force, or in her words the 'moral imperative' to act with care toward another, which she says is generated by love. She contends

When my infant cries in the night, I not only feel that I must do something but I want to do something. Because I love this child, because I am bonded to him, I want to remove his pain as I would want to remove my own. The "I must" is not a dutiful imperative but one that accompanies the "I want."

So for Noddings care ethics is in part generated by love or being bonded to another. While Held (2006) does not say that the act of caring is motivated by love, nonetheless says that the ethics of care attends to the lack of acknowledgement of caring, and 'refuses to relegate care to a realm "outside morality" (p. 10). Held is right to highlight that caring for others is important to acknowledge, and that it should be understood as an aspect of morality. It has been to date a missing dimension of what is valued in society, as I discussed in Chapter Four, particularly in relation to Nozick. He was adamant that persons were 'separate', stating that 'his is the only life he has' (1974, p. 33). And while this is true, it is also true that we are totally dependent on a myriad of others in order that we are able to function as an individual. It is also true to say that we can only become separate entities if we have been nurtured within a family for many years, a family which has itself been supported by the community in which the individual was raised. It is not the act of caring itself that is most important, however, but what the act of caring *does* – what it signifies. It is a pertinent example of an act where we directly interact with another with sensitivity and thoughtfulness in response to their needs. It is one example of our dependence on others.

The second characteristic, Held says, in stark contrast to the 'dominant rationalist approaches', is that an ethics of care values emotions (2006, p. 10). While not all emotions are valued or useful, Held (2006) states that emotions such as sympathy, empathy, sensitivity, and responsiveness are the kinds of emotions which need to be cultivated, 'not only to help in the implementation of the dictates of reason but to better ascertain what morality recommends' (p. 10). Even anger, she suggests, can be an effective emotion, propelling moral indignation toward an 'appropriate interpretation of the moral wrong' (2006, p. 10).

I agree with Held's position on emotions and on the way that they can facilitate our movement into action, providing moral impetus. As has been noted previously in this thesis, emotions have been shown to be fundamentally important to the development and functioning of other types of processing in the brain, as well as to our volition. Held (2006) is not arguing that 'raw emotion can be a guide to morality', as feelings need to be reflected on, but that 'moral enquiries that rely entirely on reason and rationalistic deductions or calculations are seen as deficient' (p. 10). As the neuroscience evidence I discussed in Chapter Two highlighted, emotions are inseparable from our cognitive capacities; therefore, moral theories can no longer advocate for the pure use of the rational mind. Solomon (2007) agrees, articulating well why it is we need to change our perspective on the role of the emotions. He states that

Our emotions supposedly make us misperceive the way things really are, make us do things that, with just a moment's clear thinking, we would not do. But some recent research and thinking about emotions has dramatically turned this picture around. To talk about the "intelligence" of emotions is to say that there are good arguments that without our emotions, we would not be capable of rational decision making at all. Furthermore, there is a serious question whether our emotions distort our judgements about the world or rather make them meaningful (p. 3).

Solomon and Held are right to appeal to the idea that emotions ought to be reconceived more positively in philosophy. Volition has to be motivated or propelled by some force. While emotions may sometimes be unregulated and precipitate, leading to ill-thought-out actions, it is evident that when a person has acquired good emotional regulation their emotions will tend to induce well-considered behaviours.

A third claim Held makes relates to the perception in traditional moral theories that family and friends have been relegated to 'the tribal, or to a source of the unfair favouring of one's own' (Held 2006); whereas, Held (2006) says, 'Those who conscientiously care for others are not seeking primarily to further their own *individual* interests' – rather, she says, persons who care for others are simply caring for the other in an act of compassionate consideration (p. 12). I believe Held's point here is about intent. Caring for another is not undertaken to advantage one's own family members; it is generated by a natural inclination to act caringly toward those with whom we live, even though it may advantage those who receive it. But that this ought not preclude the notion of caring from offering something to moral deliberations.

A fourth of Held's (2006) arguments suggests a need to reconceptualise ideas about public and private realms, an issue I raised in Chapter Four. I will not say a lot about it here. Held (2006) states that the concept of the fully rational agent was conceived without taking account of 'the moral issues that arise between interconnected persons in the contexts of family, friendship, and social groups' (p. 13). Held states that

The dominant theories can be interpreted as importing into moral theory a concept of the person developed primarily for liberal political and economic theory, seeing the person as a rational autonomous agent, or a self-interested individual (p. 13).

While I doubt that liberalist thinkers deliberately intended that people should be made to fit political and economic theory, they did end up with a concept of personhood that seems tailor-made for this role. As I discussed in Chapter Three, capitalism, or certain capitalistic forces, have exploited the idea of self-sufficiency and its natural bedfellow of self-interest to drive the competitive side of human nature, thus massaging the drive for wealth creation. Yet the truth that care ethicists have steadfastly pursued is that we ought to recognise the disconnect between this self-interested view and the reality of life, a reality that reveals our interdependence and need to consider matters that arise between the unequal and dependent (Held 2006, p. 13). Another care ethicist whose views I shall now consider is Michael Slote.

### **Slote's Ethics of Care and Empathy**

In *The Ethics of Care and Empathy*, Slote (2007) argues that, with the inclusion of some additional ideas, the ethics of care can function as more than a complementary theory to that of justice; it can offer a full account of both political and individual morality. Slote (2007) offers three specific ideas. In the first, he argues for an expansion of an ethics of care to accommodate empathy to a greater degree (p. 4). While it may be argued that empathy is inherent in the ethics of care, Slote argues that it has not had the degree of prominence that it should have had, and that it expands care to encompass those unknown to us. Slote says that he took his cue from psychology to show that empathy is 'the primary mechanism of caring, benevolence, compassion, etc.' (p. 4). Experiments, he argues, show that 'empathy plays a crucial enabling role in the development of genuinely altruistic concern or caring for others', and that 'differences in strength of force of empathy make a difference to how much we care about the fate of others in various different situations' (p. 13). As I have

previously discussed, according to Hüther (2006) empathy encourages the highest order of neural functioning, actually enabling our intelligence to be fully realised. He states that 'empathy requires a tremendously refined level of perceiving and processing other people's nonverbally expressed feelings' (Hüther 2006, p. 114). It is this refinement of perception, I argue, that is so useful to our ability to conduct ourselves morally. And it goes to the heart of Slote's argument – that '*empathetic* caring corresponds better to common-sense moral distinctions than anything that can be understood by reference to caring taken, ... on its own' (authors italics) (p. 14). Care can simply be provided to another, perhaps in a nursing situation where assistance may be provided purely as a matter of work routine; however, when an attitude of empathetic caring is demonstrated along with the physical care, it carries with it moral volition. This is in direct contrast to Kant's claim that moral action must be motivated by duty alone, as I discussed in Chapter Three.

Slote (2007) also discusses how we may acquire empathy, citing some psychological research from which he concludes that the

... development of full moral motivation and behaviour requires the intervention of parents and others ... [which] attempts to inculcate moral thought, motivation, and behaviour (merely) by citing, or admonishing with explicit moral rules or precepts (p. 15).

Slote accepts the idea that moral motivation does require parental guidance and deliberate teaching. I have no reason to doubt that his account of how to motivate children to gain a better sense of moral motivation is accurate; however, as I have discussed throughout this thesis, the foundations of our social and moral development are laid down during infancy, paralleling our emotional maturation, and thus arise as a by-product of that development. Therefore if the ethics of care is to develop fully, it must accommodate the notion that the process of positive infant nurturing is critical to the development of moral wellbeing, which may be reinforced and deepened through later interactions. If, however, nurturing has been inadequate, the child may have emotional deficits that act as a barrier to later reinforcement of moral codes. Therefore, the ethics of care must come to encompass the most important process which leads to a facilitation of the development of moral wellbeing in human beings.

The second major difference in caring ethics, Slote (2007) says, is an attempt 'to show that a care-ethical approach can be used to understand all of individual and political morality' (p. 2). The majority of care ethicists, he claims, viewed caring as something that was limited to those physically close to us, and therefore, as we do not have relationships with distant others, care ethics would not apply to them. In part, Slote (2007) says, this was implicit in the idea that our 'moral relations with distant people we have never met cannot be subsumed under an ethics of care, but must be understood, rather, in terms of general notions as justice and rights' (p. 1). He adds that

... [it has been] assumed that caring is only one side of morality, and that traditional masculine thinking in terms of justice, autonomy, and rights also has some validity or proper influence within our total thinking about morality (pp. 1-2).

Slote raises an important issue here. I agree that we ought to apply an empathetic, caring attitude to distant others in the same way we do to those we know and care about. Indeed, I posit that we ought to apply a Millsian-type view toward others, whether known to us or not. This can expand our view of other, as I described in Chapter One, to one encompassing a sense of oneness and connectedness with all others. This feeling is not restricted to those we know; it does not discriminate between people; therefore our moral motivation, if indeed it *is* moral, ought to extend to all others, not only those to whom we are close.

Slote also investigates how an ethics of care challenges Kantian liberalism. He bases his discussion on *respect*, stating that, in philosophical terms, it has tended to be reserved for those who lead autonomous lives as rational beings, as opposed to those who simply have care and concern for the welfare of others. Respect therefore has not been assumed for all people. Slote (2007) argues that, although respect has been used as an argument against utilitarianism and sentimentalism, he believes that a 'sentimentalist ethics of care can, in fact, ground respect and respect for autonomy, in its own terms', in reference to the application of empathy (p. 56). He says that 'concern for wellbeing and respect are often thought to clash when issues of paternalism arise' (p. 56), and that 'one shows respect for someone if, and only if, one exhibits appropriate empathetic concern for them in one's dealings with them' (p. 57). He provides two examples of paternalism to illustrate this point, one of a father and his children, and the other of the Spanish Inquisition. In the former example, he discusses the inherent differences between a father who takes his child to the

doctor, despite the child's protestations – acting in the child's best interest - and that of a parent who has difficulty separating their own needs from that of the child, and who ultimately disregards the wishes of the child and thus the child's autonomy. Slote's answer to resolving the issue of paternalism and respect is to take a sentimentalist approach, which he argues would give rise to respect in care ethical terms. He argues that

... roughly, autonomy is regarded as the capacity for making and acting on one's own decisions, and the lack of respect at the very least involves not letting the person exercise that capacity. However, when a *parent* insists, against a child's loudly expressed wishes, on taking that child to the doctor's or dentist's, we *don't* think they are necessarily showing a lack of respect for the child (2007, pp. 56-57).

In this example, Slote argues that, as long as an empathetic attitude is applied to the caring of the child, the child's autonomy is respected. Slote claims that there is a lack of respect in most cases where there is a supposed concern for wellbeing; however, if we expand the notion of caring to include empathy, then the ethics of care will be able to 'account for respect' (p. 57).

In the later example, Slote (2007) suggests that the torture inflicted on people in order to force confessions from them was justified on the basis that 'the religious practices and beliefs of heretics were said to threaten the stability of the state' (p. 58). Slote (2007) argues against this kind of paternalistic justification:

So-called concern for those one persecutes involves, or is accompanied by, an attitude that is arrogantly dismissive of, and lacking in empathy for, the viewpoint of the other. And that is why the idea that empathy is a necessary basis for respect allows us to criticize religious persecution and coercion in care-ethical terms (p. 59).

While I agree with Slote's sentiments, I think it can also be argued that paternalism in most forms should be viewed as wrongly conceived, and therefore no longer a justification for a just social order. As we have discussed, paternalistic structures do not serve people in general; Slote's persecution example highlights this. This understanding allows the leap from respect for rational, free, autonomous beings to respect for *all* autonomous beings; however, I would go one step further and argue that respect is implied in all empathetic relations. We should therefore extend our empathy to *all* people, in line with the premise of Slote's argument, and provide it to people whether or not they are viewed as autonomous.

In a recent article written by Gilligan (2014) in which she re-evaluates the ethics of care, she too discusses the importance of empathy and respect. I shall discuss her views next.

### **Gilligan's Reframing of the Ethics of Care**

Gilligan (2014) has recently re-examined the ethics of care with a focus on what she considers might constitute moral injury. In the article titled *Moral Injury and the Ethics of Care*, she states that new evidence has convinced her that the ethics of care is concerned with love, democratic citizenship, and resistance to moral injury (p. 90). Gilligan begins the article stating that we can no longer ignore the paradigm shift that has been permeating the human sciences, and which has so much relevance to human moral conduct. This is precisely what I have been presenting in this thesis. Gilligan (2014) states that

A growing body of evidence coming from developmental psychology, neurobiology, primatology, and evolutionary anthropology has framed what had been taken as milestones of development in a new light. Rather than signifying healthy forms of maturation, the separation of the self from relationships and the splitting of thought from emotion signal injury or responses to trauma (p. 89).

The idea that we have in effect been separating thought from emotion, and thus causing moral injury, does more than simply challenge many existing moral theories - it presents the case that the accepted ideas inherent in those theories have been responsible for perpetuating ideas that equate to moral injury. While her statement may sound dramatic, data on infant development indicates that we are primed to connect at birth, such that when deep loving connections are not made infants develop insecure attachment. This registers in the psyche as injury.

Gilligan also looks to evolutionary anthropologist Sarah Blaffer Hrdy for evidence. This evidence shows, she says, that empathy, co-operation, and mindreading may be the key to human survival. She also takes evidence from neurobiology, which shows, she claims, that the nervous system is 'wired to connect mind and body, thought and emotion'; hence, when we separate our emotions and thoughts we may be able to think rationally but we lose the ability 'to register experience and navigate the human social world' (Gilligan 2014, p. 89). While I dispute the idea that we can separate emotions from the rational mind, I agree that when we do learn to block our emotions we narrow the resources from which we can navigate socially. And yet, in a sense the blocking of emotions is what philosophy has been



recommending when advocating for a liberalist version of autonomy with its lack of other regard. Lack of other regard was no more obvious than was advocated by Nozick. Indeed he was consumed with the idea that when persons were required to give that they were being used by others, stating that individuals were 'not resources for others' (1974, p. 33).

Gilligan (2014) maintains that listening to women initiated a paradigm shift which 'began with the recognition that empathy and caring are human strengths', and that, prior to this, recognition of these human characteristics had been omitted as part of life's truth (p. 89). She states that 'we had been telling a false story about ourselves, falsely gendered and false in its representation of human nature' (p. 90). The evidence I have discussed and outlined in this thesis confirms this narrative. Looking to infant developmental research and the observation that infants seek interaction with their loved other, Gilligan (2014) says that

Rather than asking how do we gain the capacity to care, and how do we learn to take the point of view of the other and overcome the pursuit of self-interest, we are prompted to ask instead: how do we lose the capacity to care, what inhibits our ability to empathize with others and pick up the emotional climate, and how do we fail to register the difference between being in and out of touch? And most painfully, how do we lose the capacity to love? (p. 90).

Gilligan is right to look at this picture from a new perspective and ask the poignant questions she does. Evidence does show that loving and responsive nurturing promotes development in the infant, engendering good social skills, a feeling of connectedness with others, and a sense of belonging – of being loved. So Gilligan rightly asks how we lose this capacity, because, if we are in receipt of the positive nurturance I have discussed, then a loving demeanour is automatic. As I have pointed out previously, however, a great many do not receive this kind of nurturance, so do not gain the kind of neural patterning that enables the development of the positive attributes that facilitate the growth of good social skills. Gilligan (2014) says that 'these capacities can be encouraged and developed, but they can also be traumatized and stunted' (p. 90). Although I will not examine the issue in this thesis, we can speculate that social enculturation also urges people to turn away from the skills they may possess when they are constantly encouraged to devalue them, and to value instead ideals such as separation, individualism and self-sufficiency.

Gilligan (2014) also explores in her article some research which provides an account of Vietnam Veterans' stories about tasks they were required to undertake during their war

time service. What Gilligan said she found in their stories was that people seemed to carry an inner moral compass ‘which alerts us when we’ve lost our way or are doing something we know in our hearts is wrong’ (p. 92). This moral compass, I believe, in line with the evidence in Chapter Two, is developed in infancy, through the loving, responsive process of nurturing that I have previously discussed. For some, however, this moral compass is not set well. When we are not nurtured in a loving, responsive way, we often fail to learn regulation over our emotions, or to gain a sense of belonging, and our moral compass fails to form, or forms in a confused, undirected way. For such people it may well be easier to cross moral boundaries, to remain unaffected by morally confronting circumstances or situations, whether on the battle field or in the board room.

Gilligan (2014) also looks to studies of boys and their friendships which seem to show that at a certain age boys close down and stop speaking intimately with their friends. After interviews with the boys, Gilligan says she discerned that they closed down because ‘emotional intimacy and vulnerability have a gender (girly) and sexuality (gay), and being a man means being emotionally stoic and independent’ (p. 94). I raised such ideas in Chapter Four. Frustratingly, it is such negatively flavoured gendered influences that feminists have been trying to overturn for decades that were so evident in the interviews Gilligan reported in 2011. Gilligan argues that such prevalent and pervasive gendered notions stymie the social and emotional capacities of boys, maintaining the patriarchal order in society; yet it is the very capacities that Gilligan critiques which are at the centre of a liberalist kind of autonomy. Several feminist philosophers have sought to identify an alternative criterion for autonomy – an issue I shall discuss next.

### **An Alternative Autonomy**

As discussed above, some care ethicists have challenged the idea that maturation can be found in the liberalist definition of autonomy. While I discussed autonomy in Chapter One, and suggested that there was *no* definitive definition, a common view was that it entailed persons pursuing individualism and self-sufficiency. In this section I will continue to explore the view that autonomy is actually to be found in human interdependence. Exploring an alternative version of autonomy is useful, as I will argue that it can contribute to the solution to the main dilemma of this thesis.

Mackenzie and Stoljar (2000) explore the reason for feminists wishing to develop a new form of autonomy. They state that although the idea of autonomy at first glance appears to 'hold out much promise, in providing both a liberatory goal and a moral standpoint from which to criticize sex-based oppression', its concept of the autonomous individual is 'now generally regarded by feminist theorists with suspicion' (p. 3). They outline the problem many feminists have with the liberal conception of the autonomous person:

Crudely stated, the charge is that the concept of autonomy is inherently masculinist, that it is inextricably bound up with masculine character ideals, with assumptions about selfhood and agency that are metaphysically, epistemologically, and ethically problematic from a feminist perspective ... What lies at the heart of these charges is the conviction that the notion of individual autonomy is fundamentally individualistic and rationalistic (p. 3)

Feminists are right to challenge the idea that autonomy ought to be based in individualism and rationalism. As I discussed in Chapter One, happiness tends to reside in the *opposite* of these things, in human connection and interdependence, as well as in well-regulated emotions. In consideration of this, traditional autonomy should be rejected. Mackenzie and Stoljar (2000) discuss the term 'relational autonomy', a term they use to denote the thinking that is behind this alternative autonomy. They argue that the term

... does not refer to a single unified conception of autonomy but is rather an umbrella term, designating a range of related perspectives. These perspectives are premised on a shared conviction, the conviction that persons are socially embedded and that agents' identities are formed within the context of social relationships and shaped by a complex of intersecting social determinants, such as race, class, gender, and ethnicity (p. 4).

The idea that people are shaped by their social relationships offers a radical departure from the definition that viewed autonomous beings as self-sufficient and independent.

Mackenzie and Stoljar state therefore that 'the focus of relational approaches is to analyse the implications' of these interactions (2000, p. 4).

Mackenzie and Stoljar's work (2000) reviews care critiques of autonomy, including Lorraine Code's 'symbolic critique', claiming that Code's critique is 'not directed toward any particular theory of autonomy but rather toward the abstraction or character ideal of the 'autonomous man' (p. 6). Code (1991) says that the 'Enlightenment hero, celebrating his freedom to trust in the power of his own reason and ready to shed the constraints of

heteronomy', is a modern version of autonomous man, a version linked to a 'cluster of derivative assumptions' (p. 77). She states that

Autonomous man is – and should be – self-sufficient, independent, and self-reliant, a self-realizing individual who directs his efforts towards maximizing his personal gains. His independence is under constant threat from other (equally self-serving) individuals: hence he devises rules to protect himself from intrusion. Talk of rights, rational self-interest, expediency, and efficiency permeates his moral, social, and political discourse. In short there has been a gradual alignment of *autonomy* with *individualism* (pp. 77-78).

While it could be argued that Code's version of autonomous man represents almost a caricature, I included it here as I do think it is representative of a real world model that is promoted in society, one to which most persons believe they should aspire, as I discussed in Chapter One and Chapter Three in relation to Nozick.

According to Baier (1995), care critiques are also centred on the idea that autonomy is masculinist and holds to 'Kantian overtones of distance', wherein our first obligations of justice are not to persons but to keeping contracts - 'due process, equal opportunity ..., liberties of speech, free association and assembly' etc (pp. 50-51). With a focus on keeping civil society going, Baier (1995) says that such people

... may well be lonely, driven to suicide, apathetic about their work and about participation in political processes, find their lives meaningless and have no wish to leave offspring to face the same meaningless existence. Their rights, and respect for rights, are quite compatible with every great misery, and misery whose causes are not just individual misfortunes and psychic sickness, but social and moral impoverishment (p. 51).

Baier is right. An autonomous person, as defined in liberal terms, may well appear to direct their life rationally and freely, and to command respect for the way they conduct their self-directed life, but this does not mean their life is a happy one. Indeed, they may be bereft of deep connections with others as they have placed their focus on their autonomy as defined by liberalist ideals. Failing to place emphasis and importance on attributes such as love, friendship, and care is to fail to place importance on the need we have to connect with others, as discussed in Chapter One. Emotions were seen as the antithesis of rationality, as I discussed in relation to Kant. Emotions, as I pointed out in Chapter Two, are not only necessary, but their development and regulation are essential to the effective functioning of the cognitive mind, and therefore essential to our rational capacities. Care ethicists are

consequently right to call for a reconfiguration of autonomy so that it no longer always carries with it the idea of 'rational man'.

As just discussed, Held is right to say in her ideas on the ethics of care that we start off as dependent beings and that we remain interdependent, relying on networks of others to support our decision-making. We cannot function without a myriad of other persons also functioning well; hence, I think it right and reasonable that we reconfigure what it means to be autonomous in the context of our interconnectedness. Further, in philosophy's quest to substantiate what promotes and facilitates moral action, understanding that interconnectedness rather than pure reason advances our ability to achieve moral wellbeing is an important progression. We now realise that holding a position of separateness and independence from others does not engender care and consideration of others, and thus cannot engender moral behaviour. Within the ethics of care, this is what exploration of autonomy seeks to do, Held says. She claims that 'those motivated by the ethics of care would seek to become more admirable relational persons in better caring relations' (2006, p. 14). While seeking to become 'more admirable relational persons' is useful to personal advancement, however, Held is not able to describe how this might happen. Meyers (1987) on the other hand does suggest a possible pathway to enhancing our social relations. She says that if people 'survey their options guided by their self-scrutinized feelings, values, goals, and the like, and then marshall the determination to follow their own counsel, they live autonomously' (Meyers 1987, p. 627) -but this pathway offers nothing new. Dworkin (2012) suggests that self-scrutiny has been an inherent aspect of liberal autonomy for some liberal proponents, as discussed in Chapter One. What care ethicists call for in requiring persons to improve their relational abilities, in effect, is for them to improve their wellbeing. Just as Kant wanted people to act from their rational capacities however, wanting persons to have or do a particular thing does not mean they can automatically do it. There has to be an avenue through which people can acquire such attributes, but this avenue is not explicated in any of the alternative autonomy accounts.

In the following section I will bring together the ideas of Held (2006), Slote (2007) and Gilligan (1993, 2014), and argue that, with the inclusion of the data from Chapters One and Two, the ethics of care can be developed into a more complete and encompassing ethic, which I will call an ethic of social, emotional and moral wellbeing.

## **The Ethic of Social, Emotional and Moral Wellbeing**

Gilligan's original work challenged the idea that justice was a superior tool with which to solve moral dilemmas. I have argued that a broadened version of an ethics of care which Gilligan's research stimulated, one that not only views issues through the idea of relationship but which encompasses empathy and respect, can, with a synthesis of the findings from the psychological data I discussed in Chapters One and Two, form the basis of a more encompassing ethics of care and therefore more thorough system of justice. This new ethic recognises that social, emotional, and moral wellbeing – the things we need in order to flourish - are primarily established through attachment parenting. Calling this reconfigured ethic of care, the ethic of social, emotional and moral wellbeing, I will argue it can be used to solve the dilemma at the heart of this thesis by showing that the dilemma does not actually exist; rather, it is a matter of perception. Given that attachment parenting takes place within the family, I will examine how the family currently perceives its role and how the ethic of social, emotional, and moral wellbeing can support it to conceptualise a new and more helpful role.

The analyses of infant neuroscientific data and attachment theory, presented in Chapter Two, showed that our original nurturing relationship provides the long-term foundations for our conduct, socially, emotionally and morally. Positive nurturing is associated with high levels of emotional and social wellbeing, the attributes I discussed in Chapter One as being necessary for people to flourish. I have asserted that acquisition of these attributes establishes our moral compass. This argument has a strong bearing on moral theories, which have long posited the means of developing a moral way of being. I have established that the conditions which ignite moral volition are found in the intimate to and fro of a warm, loving and responsive relationship with our primary attachment figure. The answer to the question: what precipitates moral behaviour? - a question which we have deliberated upon for eons - is therefore to be found in our first, intimate relationship. Not only did we find that this relationship is of principal importance to us, but that it is also characteristic of the kinds of relationships we will subsequently form with others. As happiness research shows, the way we interact with others is also highly significant to our later ongoing happiness levels. Social autonomy, which promotes engaging with others with a social

attitude, therefore offers a better fit for the kind of thinking that can advance social and emotional wellbeing.

I have similarly suggested that the importance of the idea of care is not in the act of caring itself, but in the intent or volition behind it. It is the volition that is generated by the acquisition of good social and emotional skills that informs the way we interrelate with others, while, in relating positively, we generate good will and increase our own wellbeing. To become a flourishing individual has been the ultimate aim of human life ever since we have questioned for the nature of the 'best' life. What I have been able to show is that flourishing is enabled when our inner life is characterised by wellbeing, that is, when we are psychologically near the pinnacle of mental wellbeing. This pinnacle is also associated with social and moral wellbeing – developing in tandem with psychological wellbeing.

Suggesting that a reconfigured ethics of care become an ethic of social, emotional, and moral wellbeing, I submit, is far reaching. Philosophers have been posing questions such as 'what is the best life?' and 'what is the best way to live?' for thousands of years. They have been right to say that the best life is a virtuous life. What they have not adequately settled is how we can facilitate virtuousness in people, and what kind of virtuousness we mean. I believe that by bringing together happiness research and infant neuroscience, and considering them through a prism of social, emotional, and moral wellbeing, that we can now answer these original philosophical questions. The best way to live, and what makes the best life, is a life where people can regulate their emotions, where they are able to readily socially connect with and feel connected to others, and where their major emphasis in life is not wealth creation, but their relational connectedness to others and their communities. People will access such skills, attributes and attitudes if they are raised in an attachment parenting model. Such persons are able to luxuriate in the company of others because their initial social experiences in life both instilled in them a sense of belonging and provided a sense of security. Such persons are not driven by seeking to fulfil an unfulfilled aspect of themselves – they are content.

## **Families**

In this thesis I have sought to establish that good social, emotional, and moral wellbeing is dependent on the receipt of good nurturing. In most instances nurturing takes place in a

family setting; however, as previously discussed, the family has been viewed as one of the seats of paternalism. To suggest therefore that it should be viewed as the primary support mechanism for our most important social learning experiences will require us to view the family from a different perspective. After all, most of us live in families, and it is in families where we raise our children, and where we live our intimate lives. Whether or not we like it, it is one of few alternative structures for living. What is changing however, is the makeup of individual families. Families are becoming increasingly diverse, often now being made up of same sex couples and single parent families, and in many places, particularly Australia, more culturally mixed.

However, no matter what the class, family structure is largely the same in the West – nuclear, therefore it will be the main focus of discussion. However, I do not suggest that the nuclear family represents the ideal family – as they appear to lack a number of resources. In Chapter 7 I discuss the major problems as I see them in the nuclear family and what mechanisms may be put in place to better support them, so that they may gain some of the supports that were and are still available in somewhat rare extended families. It is the small size of nuclear families and their economic self-containment that has necessarily concentrated family members' attention on their economic survival, families being responsible largely for their own self-management and self-sufficiency. Nowadays, families adopt, as their assumed rights, not only the right to survive but the right to pursue wealth creation. This pursuit requires parents to spend a substantial amount of time away from their infants and children to attend their workplace. This circumstance, alongside the attitude of society at large which assumes that maturation is to be found in a liberalist version of autonomy, and together with the expectation that parents ought to return to the workplace as soon as possible after the birth of their babies, places additional pressure on families to participate in income generation as their main occupation. This is no small thing. Such ideas have pervaded our thinking largely unquestioned, leading to both the unquestioned view that individual wealth creation and autonomy are of utmost importance to individuals, and to the utilisation of childcare as the pathway to both aspirations. This model has been normalised, with the adjunct view that capitalism offers the right mechanism to fund economic society. Capitalism has enabled increasing prosperity, and in its turn enabling ever higher levels of consumerism. The model requires parents to acquire



the income to spend, placing pressure on families to bring in two incomes. Furthermore, families imagine that there will be no detrimental effects on their babies from placing them in childcare.

While it is often argued that families need two incomes to survive, Australians in the 1950s for example typically lived on one income, a situation that was readily accepted. Since that time there has been a 'large general increase in prosperity' across the country (Australian-Government 2000). While that is not to say that no families require a second income to survive, our expectations have also increased. The size of the average family home for instance has increased dramatically: 'The average floor area of new residential buildings increased by 37.4% (from 149.7 m<sup>2</sup> to 205.7 m<sup>2</sup>) between 1984-95 and 2002-03 (Australian-Government 2005). These statistics suggest that our increased wealth is growing in line with our expectations to spend. This requires us to find ever larger income streams. We can only assume we have come to believe that higher income, greater spending power, and a bigger house size equates to greater levels of happiness. As discussed in Chapter One, however, studies show that, 'individuals who held financial success as a more central aspiration than self-acceptance, affiliation, or community feeling', had lower psychological adjustment (Kasser & Ryan 1993, p. 420). Indeed, Kasser and Ryan found the opposite was true: that those whose primary aspirations were self-acceptance, affiliation, and community feeling had higher psychological adjustment levels.

The idea that happiness and self-fulfilment are not found in the central aspiration of wealth creation, but in self-acceptance and affiliation, requires a change in our perception of what is important. It also means that we must reassess where maturation is to be found. I have argued that it is not found in the liberalist idea of autonomy, but rather in emotional regulation and the kinds of attributes I have described as being linked to social autonomy. Such a change of perspective does not however eradicate the real difficulties women in particular have experienced when taking time away from the workplace to nurture their infants. They have sustained the loss of such things as status, respect, financial independence, and mental wellbeing; however, as I have argued, we should not accept that motherhood is associated with such negative outcomes. I posit rather that a number of these negative features must be challenged in order that a new perspective can be adopted (I will address these issues at length in Chapter Seven).

One of the other aspects of life that I have shown to contribute to negative views of motherhood is the lack of emotional and social supports available to families. If we keep in mind Hrdy's statement, that in most cultures alloparents help care for others' offspring, and Bowlby's appeal to nurture mothers in order that they may have the emotional resources to look after their infants, coupled with the evidence that levels of postnatal depression are relatively high, it can be argued that the nuclear family has insufficient resources to adequately support mothers to undertake nurturing. Given that neuroscience shows good nurturing to require that mothers are responsive and available, the nuclear family must be provided with additional support mechanisms. I have argued that others within the family also need support if they are to try to provide support to mothers. The family I am describing is not a paternalistic one; rather it is a family which offers the foundation for the growth of each of its members. As Blustein (1982) stated in his early work, 'the family is not merely a collection of separate individuals, but a community in which the satisfaction of one kind of interest entails the satisfaction of the other' (p. 6). This family is interdependent.

I posit therefore that with knowledge of what best facilitates their infant's development, and of what supports their own wellbeing, families would have better tools with which to make decisions about the care arrangements of their infants. Armed with such knowledge, families would more readily embrace a psychosocial perspective on their parenting, adopting a Millsian-like attitude, one that promotes interdependence, acceptance, affiliation, and community feeling, a model more correctly aligned with human maturation. Such a perspective would enable families to see that taking time out of the paid workforce to engage in maternal work during children's infancy period would not be detrimental to women's lives. Women are no longer faced with the same circumstances that led Friedan in the 1960s to call for women to return to work after having children. Women are no longer tied to their homes, post children, as they typically have been, and they are able to exercise many and varied choices throughout their lives. I'm not suggesting that women have all the choices or support they need; nor am I saying they ought to forgo their self-directed lives, their freedom, or their careers. Indeed, they ought to retain these things; however, I am suggesting that taking a small amount of time out of a woman's usual life to nurture her infants during a time in the child's life when, as neuroscientific evidence suggests, it is most critical for infants to have the full attention of their attachment figures, should no longer be

viewed as a negative personal or career move – it reflects a clear perspective on what really matters in human psychology (I will discuss how this can be fully achieved in Chapter Seven). In fact, as we have seen, taking time out of the workplace and embracing the idea of immersing the self with infants in attachment parenting can offer a unique opportunity to engage on an interactional level that no other time of life can offer (with the possible exception of grandparenthood).

A new appreciation and respect for the role of nurturer, and for its inherent value, will flow from rejecting past negative associations of motherhood, and reframing those associations in a way that commands respect and status for the nurturer. It will flow from an understanding that positive nurturing produces the most important goods of life. The prism of the ethics of social, emotional and moral wellbeing enables parents to assess their family's needs from a perspective which supports their understanding that the health and wellbeing of their infants is bound up in spending time with them. Caring for our offspring while they are tiny, vulnerable infants would no longer be viewed as compromising women's or men's autonomy. Indeed, I have shown that it can increase it. With the correct tools, we can see that we have been measuring the dilemma against the wrong criteria. Knowing where true value lies can enable us to re-evaluate our direction and lead us to a more human and supportive perspective from which to make decisions. Ultimately, an ethic of social, emotional, and moral wellbeing directs us to value our relationships above all else. It directs us to see that value is in the intimate, loving gestures which enhance our sense of belonging and caring for each other, and that can enhance our sense of social autonomy. In the end, what we are discussing is encapsulated by one word – love. It is ultimately the driver which underpins our volition to nurture our infants in the ultimately positive way. It is a topic I shall explore in the following chapter.

## **Conclusion**

In this chapter I set out to show that a synthesis of ideas from the happiness and infant neuroscience data, together with ideas from an expanded version of the ethics of care and a reconfigured version of autonomy, have provided a pathway from which to resolve the dilemma at the heart of this thesis. This pathway, I have argued, offers a truer perspective from which to make decisions about infant caring.

To come to this conclusion I first briefly discussed the development of the ethics of care, and then discussed the main features of the theory as outlined by Held (2006). Next, I turned to Michael Slote's discussion of the theory in which he argued there was a need to place a greater emphasis on the concept of empathy, as this would expand significantly the ethics of care and help to account for some of the shortcomings in the theory. I then explored a recent article written by Gilligan (2014) in which she pointed out that recent scientific data indicated that previously identified markers of health, such as independence, were actually a sign of moral injury.

Next, I examined an alternative feminist critique of autonomy, discussing Mackenzie and Stoljar's (2000) examination of various forms of this alternative autonomy for which they provided the umbrella term relational autonomy. This term highlighted the fact that people are shaped within the context of social relationships by those with whom they are surrounded as they develop. I agreed with Slote (2007) that this concept was too narrow, with the word relational implying that an interdependent attitude is restricted to those to whom we are close. I argued that the idea of our autonomy ought to encompass a social attitude that has empathy and respect at its core for *all* persons, reflecting a Millsian outlook. This I called social autonomy. This perspective argues that the liberalist account of autonomy does not represent maturation; rather it represents an erroneous ideal which ultimately works to undermine happiness.

I then argued that the bringing together of the neuroscientific and happiness data from Chapters One and Two, and synthesising it with ideas from an ethics of care and social autonomy, could generate a new ethic, one that shows the foundations of human social, emotional, and moral wellbeing are to be found in the way we are nurtured. This enabled me to highlight why nurturing should be profoundly important to ethical theory, and to care ethics in particular. I also discussed how the kind of nurturing which enables the development of secure attachment naturally produces an egalitarian volition, and therefore must sit at the centre of care ethics. The significance of the act of nurturing to social, emotional and moral behaviours, I argued, demands that the ethic of care become an ethic of human wellbeing.

I argued therefore that this information ought to inform our perspective on life, and thus affect our decision-making, as wellbeing and happiness are the very things humans want. Yet, I also argued, there has been persistent governmental oversight when it comes to providing parents with any good information about parenting. I asserted that, if parents were given access to the kind of information that I have outlined in this thesis, it would facilitate decision-making by women and men regarding care arrangements for their infants. Finally, I argued, attachment parenting not only advantages infants, but also offers an opportunity to increase parental autonomy through the intimate interactions parents share with their infants. The depth of these attachment relationships, I will argue in the following chapter, can only be classified as one thing – love.

## *Chapter 6 - Love*

In Chapter One I established that parents have a duty to provide the conditions under which their children may flourish. In Chapter Two I outlined the empirical evidence that specified the parental behaviours to which infants must be exposed in order that they may experience the kind of wellbeing that supports their ability to flourish. In this chapter, I will argue that there is a word, little used, that is yet profoundly important to the infant and parent relationship – indeed is an essential ingredient – it is the word *love*. Philosophers and neuroscientists appear reluctant to use this particular word - possibly because it is a word that is more readily associated with romantic love and ephemeral states - but love is a word that I will argue provides a critically important volitional tool for the care and protection of our infants, and which, when experienced, enables the infant to feel a sense of belonging, a state foundational to their wellbeing. Love is the critical factor informing parental behaviour, and thus it needs to be explored and discussed. Without understanding its critical role, we run the risk of sidestepping an important facet of the parent/child relationship, thereby maintaining a somewhat clinical and therefore limited view of what is taking place within the relationship.

While parental love has been acknowledged as a long-standing human phenomenon, however, it has ‘not been subject to much philosophical analysis’ (Mullin 2007, p. 383). Three philosophers who have written articles principally on the topic of love in relation to children are Liao (2006a; 2006b), Mullin (2007) and Solheim (1999). Liao argues that parents have a duty to love their children, whereas Cowden argues that love cannot be commanded, and therefore cannot be required as a duty. Solheim on the other hand, suggests that if parents can’t love their children they should be required to at least ‘try’ to love their children. While these are important issues, I will suggest that such arguments are focused in the wrong direction. I will assert that there are rarely instances of a lack of parental love. I will argue that what appears to be a *lack* of love is actually an inability to convey love. I will claim further that this is possible as there are two components of love that are separable – the emotional feeling of love, and the act of expressing love. Parents usually assume that because they have the feeling of love for their children their children will feel this love. I will

argue however, that it is possible to feel the emotion of love, yet be unable to convey that love, and leaving children in such cases to feel unloved. So what is most needed, I will argue, is that we teach parents how to effectively convey their love.

I will also discuss what it is that leads to the separation of the two parts of love. In the absence of general philosophical literature on how parental love functions, I will briefly discuss both Erich Fromm's (1961) and populist philosopher Alain de Botton's (2016) as they both are of the opinion that love is a skill, something I argue is true. I will then discuss what the actual components of love are, and how they may be effectively be conveyed, by turning to Buddhist writer Thich Nhat Hanh (2007). I will argue his discussion of the breakdown of the components of love can help us understand what it is we need to focus on to express love well.

I will argue that, when parents understand that it is not enough to simply feel love for their children but that it must also be continually and effectively conveyed, then the parts of love can work together. When these elements - both the feeling and conveying - of love are felt by the child, the child reflects this love back to the parent - thus love operates in a natural feedback loop which expands between parent and child, entwining them on an emotional as well as physical level. I will argue that it is this expansive quality that ensures parents repeatedly provide a level of nurturing to their infants that ensures their sense of belonging and a sense of security. This is what distinguishes parents and other attachment figures from those who may be required to care for our child. I will argue that it is too much to expect others to love our children. Others have not undergone the physiological processes that drive our love for our particular child; the most we can expect therefore is that they care for the child with respect and sensitivity. Yet I have shown that infants require more than care delivered with respect and sensitivity; they require care driven by the volition that only love can generate in order that they receive responsive, enduring, warm, constant and loving nurturing. Finally, I will argue that this is why parents, and mothers in particular, need to undertake the nurturing of their children during the critical phase of infancy.

## **What Love Confers**

The United Nation's Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) states that 'for the full and harmonious development' of their personality, the child, 'should grow up in a family environment, in an atmosphere of happiness, love and understanding' (1998, p. 1). Few child-focused philosophers dispute this claim. I will discuss Archard (2003, 2015b), Austin (2007), and Blustein's (1982) ideas in regard to parental love. While they agree that love is good for children, there is some debate about how much love is reasonable for parents to provide. Other philosophers such as Liao (2006a; 2006b), Solheim (Solheim 1999), and Cowden (2012) discuss whether parents have a duty *to* love their children, which I will discuss.

For most parents, the birth of their young is accompanied by a whole body, spirit, and mind sensation which results in an unprecedented attraction to their infant that rarely leaves, an attraction that is usually overwhelming and surprising. We call it love. It is surprising because most parents, pre-children, could never imagine the depth of love they feel post-children, arising in them unexpectedly, as it does. In most cases therefore, parental love simply befalls us. The sensation of love that parents feel occurs apart from cognitive processes, prior to thinking about responsibilities or obligations. As we discussed in Chapter Two, love arises in mothers through the physiological mechanisms which ensure that her body is flooded with a chemical cocktail that facilitates this depth of feeling. It is fair to say that this love has, propelled human beings to care for and protect their young even when under the threat of losing their own lives, and has ensured human survival by awakening nurturing behaviour. Care ethicist Noddings describes our motivation for loving our infants as 'natural'. She says 'I do not feel that taking care of my own child is moral but, rather, natural' (p. 12). Noddings (Noddings 1995) states this is necessary as without love 'the impulse to respond, to nurture the living infant, is overwhelming' (p. 12).

Despite this there has been little philosophical analysis of parental love. While Archard (2003, 2015b), Austin (2007), and Blustein (1982) have all written books on children and parenting, and though they do suggest love is beneficial for children, they too discuss love only briefly. Austin (2007), for example, says he assumes, that consistent with common sense, 'a child is generally better off if she has a close interpersonal relationship with at least



one adult who is occupying a parental role in her life, offering her focused care, attention, love, and guidance (p. 3). Blustein (1982) too acknowledges that children should understand and experience intimate relationships. He states that

... the capacity to enter into intimate relationships is a basic good not only because deep personal relations afford us a uniquely significant pleasure, but also because they allow us to communicate with and share elements of ourselves that would otherwise remain hidden and to realize creative and emotional possibilities that enhance the quality and meaning of life (p. 219).

Blustein raises an important point: that the intimate relationship between the parent and child is unique to that particular parent and child. Neuroscience backs Blustein's (1982) statement that this exclusive relationship becomes the child's intimate relationship 'prototype', 'made possible by the capacity to commit oneself to the good of another, not as one among many to whom this commitment can be transferred, but as an irreplaceable individual' (p. 219). Parental love is the element that supports the parental capacity to deeply engage in a relationship with the parent's own child like no other, and which confers to the child certain goods which few but their own parents can provide through their love and commitment.

Solheim (1999) rightly argues that love is a central component of the parent/child relationship. She says 'that parental love is crucial for children', that love has 'moral value', and that 'a satisfactory theory of parental morality must focus centrally on the importance of parental love' (p. 2). Solheim states that

By parental love I mean parents' emotional warmth toward and connectedness with the child, genuine delight in the child herself, being on the child's side even when she fails in various ways. Parental love involves an emotional attachment for a child, a heartfelt warmth from parent to child, valuing the child for him- or herself, and a sense of solidarity with the child (p. 2).

These goods to which Solheim directs us are the kinds of goods that I discussed in Chapter Two – that neuroscientists suggest are necessary for optimal development. Emotional warmth and connectedness are conferred upon children when their parents respond to them sensitively, when they are held lovingly, when they are caressed, and when parents engage in reciprocal dialogic interactions in unrushed, warm environments. This approach toward children is not just needed for a month or two, but for their lifetime; however, it is

most necessary during infancy when the brain is experiencing its most sensitive and rapid period of growth.

Solheim (1999) argues that, when children are loved, they feel they can 'rely on parents'; they will not be 'afraid to try new things'. When they have 'an understanding of trust and trustworthiness' and 'self-respect', then they will be able to gain an 'understanding of what intimacy feels like' (pp. 3-4). Archard (2015b) too emphasises the benefits of having a high level of loving trust within the family. He says that, within the family

... one can be intimate with others and show oneself emotionally; one can be oneself safely and securely, where outside one would be vulnerable and exposed. There are important familial bonds of mutual dependence and belonging (p. 185).

Such an environment, Archard argues, delivers freedoms such as those associated with safely being oneself, and showing oneself emotionally. Being able to have these goods in the home offers the child sanctuary, provides love, and therefore a sense of belonging and acceptance. The unselfconsciousness of these goods enables people to be who they are and to explore who they are, without judgement or ridicule. These things are not immediately measurable, but they do confer long-term benefits to children – the kinds of benefits which Mary Ainsworth was able to show supported the development of secure attachment, discussed in Chapter Two. Solheim (1999) describes further benefits of gaining this deep positive inner emotional patterning:

...children who are loved need not worry about whether or not their parents' relationship with them is something on which they can rely. Children who are free of these kinds of worries can flourish in ways that children who are not as sure of their parents' love cannot. Secure children are more likely to try out new experiences and not be as afraid of making mistakes; after all, their parents' love for them is not conditional on their performance (p. 3).

An uncritical approach to the child enables them to be accepted for who they are. They are free of pressure to conform, to comply, and to be different from who they are. This conveys a sense of acceptance for the child, and, as discussed in Chapter One, sets up the foundations from which children may flourish.

So, if we can agree that parental love confers particular necessary goods to infants, it is appropriate to ask if we have a duty to supply such love to our children – a topic I will address in the following section.

## Duty to Love

Given the positive outcomes of receiving love from parents, I think it is fair to assert that children have a right to be loved. But, does such an assertion mean that parents have a duty to love their children? Whether children have a right to be loved has been considered at length by Liao (2006a; 2006b). He points out that several countries have declared that children have a right to be loved, but notes however that this implies someone has a duty to love the child (2006b, p. 421). When we say that something *ought* to take place, we are implying that it can happen. Liao (2006b) discusses an objection to the proposition that parents ought to love their children. Liao says that commanding love is an absurdity 'because love is an emotion and therefore not commandable', and since 'duties require that the action demanded by the duty be commandable', love cannot then be a duty (p. 421). What is more, it is false to say that someone ought to love another. Liao goes on to say that 'if there cannot be a duty to love, then there cannot conceptually be a right of children to be loved' (p. 421). He maintains however that there is a way of approaching this issue that upholds the notion that parents have a duty to love their children: 'a right to be loved can be justified by grounding this right in terms of human rights, by showing that love can be an appropriate object of a duty, and by proposing that biological parents should normally be made the primary bearers of this duty' (2006b, p. 422). Liao (2006b) runs his argument thus: 'Human beings have rights to those conditions that are primarily essential for a good life', and, as love is one of the primarily essential goods, Liao maintains that children also have the right to such a good. Children, he says, 'have a right to be loved' (p. 422).

As I have established above, the goods that love generally conveys to children are essential to their ability to flourish. Liao presents various psychological, empirical claims that reiterate the kinds of goods that he believes parental love provides to children. He argues that one way to evaluate the degree to which love confers goods to children is to study children who have not been loved. While he says it is obviously unethical to contemplate an experiment in which love was withheld from children, Liao argues that it is possible 'to examine the negative consequences for a person if the person is not loved as a child' (2006b, p. 423). Liao (2006b) discusses a study which monitored children in institutions. This study, he says, found 'that children who did not receive love but only adequate care became ill more frequently' (p. 423). He also reported that

... their learning capacities deteriorated significantly' that they became 'decreasingly interested in their environment, ... failed to thrive physically, ... suffered insomnia, ... were constantly depressed, ... and developed severe learning disabilities' (Liao 2006b, p. 423).

In another study, Liao (2006b) reports that 37% of the institutionalised children who did not receive love 'had died by two years of age, compared with none in the adequately mothered control group' (pp. 423-424). Liao (2006b) examines several other behavioural and neuroscientific studies, concluding that

Together, these studies convincingly demonstrate that a child's psychological, social, cognitive and even physical developments can be seriously hampered if the child is not loved (p. 424).

Looking to a large range of research studies, I too have concluded that infants do need unconditional and responsive loving care in order that they may develop a high level of wellbeing – a level of care that can comfortably, and ought to be, referred to as love.

In respect of the idea that love cannot be commanded, however, Liao (2006a) offers an alternative view. He says one may still issue a command to love as one can work to change the emotions one feels by deliberately practising the cultivation of particular emotions (Liao 2006a, p. 8). He discusses how love can grow when there is good intent, using the examples of arranged marriages and fostered children to illustrate this point; however, while it is true that in many cases greater and greater levels of familiarity can engender greater feelings of closeness to another, and may eventually lead to the feeling of deep love (Narvaez 2014, p. 120), this can take a considerable amount of time. The problem of commanding that person to love, prior to the development of any significant levels of love, remains.

Mhairi Cowden (2012) has outlined two major objections to Liao's arguments. First, she argues that it is 'absurd' to suggest that love can be commanded; and second, she says, the literature on which Liao bases his argument, reportedly showing that love is a primary and essential condition for a good life, is incorrectly argued (p. 326). I will examine Cowden's former objection first. She asks a question:

It is not clear that the emotion of love is an action that can be performed by all duty-bearers as emotions are traditionally assumed to occur without conscious control. They cannot be commanded. How then can the duty-holder reasonably discharge their duty? (2012, p. 335).

While Cowden (2012) concedes that parents may well 'have a moral obligation to try and love a child', she says that 'this is distinct from a duty to actually love the child' (pp. 335-336). This is true. Cowden is particularly scathing of Liao's assertion that children have a right to be loved, not only in receiving loving actions and behaviour from the duty-bearer, but also in requiring that the duty-bearer feel the emotion of love. Cowden (2012) argues that 'this would be like saying I have a right to bodily integrity whose fulfilment requires people to want not to stab me, not just to restrain themselves from the action' (p. 334). Cowden asks why desirable treatment of the child is not enough:

If the child is unaware of the love does this change the way we think of the duty being fulfilled? Although a baby may be able to observe the external expressions of love it is unlikely that they can perceive or understand the internal emotion of love that may be present in their parents. Given this, does it matter if the love is real or pretend? (2012, p. 337).

This view may well be commonly held. Yet, as we have discovered during this thesis, is view is wrongly conceived. It is often forgotten that an infant's first language is body language. The research I have undertaken has shown that infants are monitoring our facial expressions from birth, picking up our stress levels, heart rates, and emotionality. On balance of the scientific evidence I have presented, infants do gain a sense of how their parent feels about them. Therefore it *does* matter if love is real or pretend. Cowden remains unconvinced however that love is something that can be commanded; rather, she asserts, voluntary love is preferable.

Cowden's later critique addresses the conclusion Liao makes in regard to institutionalised children. She states that Liao does not convincingly 'substantiate ... [his] empirical claim ... that without love children suffer severe negative consequences' (p. 327). Cowden asserts that what she terms maternal deprivation can be divided into three categories: 'acute distress from loss, experiential/nutritional privation, and bond privation' (p. 328). While Cowden analyses each aspect of maternal deprivation, acknowledging that 'short-term separations cause distress', she says this can be 'countered by improving institutional care and stimulation' (p. 332). Cowden remains unconvinced that love is at the heart of the issue. She does however concede that:

What these studies seem to demonstrate is that the formation of an uninterrupted bond with the child's care-giver is an important part of their social development, and

disruption of this bond formation can lead to negative affects on the child's neurotransmitter systems' (p. 332).

While Cowden is right to critically examine Liao's claims, her statement above appears to concede that there are negative consequences to the child's social and emotional development from the factors that make up maternal deprivation. Cowden (2012) continues to maintain however that, as what was being measured in each of the studies which Liao discussed is not exactly measuring the same 'qualifier', it is 'disingenuous to state that 'lack of love' will result in these negative consequences' (p. 332). There are two things to say about Cowden's argument. The first is that, as Liao stated that the children did receive adequate physical care, he is justified in arguing that the negative outcomes found in the children's behaviour were due to an absence of maternal caring. If the point of difference was not physical care, then there must be something else mothers typically provide. As we discussed at length in Chapter Two, I believe maternal care does provide very specific necessary goods to children. Second, love is difficult to define, as I mentioned earlier, and even perhaps more difficult to accurately measure, but should not be rejected as the appropriate word to use in this instance to signify what is absent when there is an absence of maternal care. Cowden's statement, that 'many writers have rejected the use of 'love' on the grounds that it introduces mystical' and intangible elements, ought not to be the basis for rejecting Liao's claim that the children's negative behavioural outcomes were due to a lack of love.

Still, Solheim (1999) suggests an alternative approach to the problem of the 'commandability' of love. While Liao discusses the possibility of the growth of love over time, Solheim somewhat similarly suggests that parents could be required to actively 'try' to love their children in cases when they do not naturally feel love for their child/ren (1999, p. 15):

Such a duty might look something like this: those parents who find that they lack a sense of emotional warmth and connectedness to one or more of their children would be required – to the best of their abilities – to develop and to maintain love for their child(ren) (1999, p. 15).

Requiring that a parent *try* to love their child acknowledges that *commanding* parents to love their children may not be possible, as love is viewed as an emotion we cannot reasonably control; however, Solheim's argument essentially replaces the idea of a duty to love with a duty to 'try' to love. While trying to love children implies that some parents may

have difficulty loving their children, it suggests that trying to love, as opposed to not trying, may assist some parents to eventually love their children. In other words, repeatedly undertaking an action can encourage the feeling component that accompanies such actions<sup>16</sup>, and this may contribute to the development of the real feelings of love, as Liao appears to suggest. I will submit in the following section however that the real issue is not so much that parents sometimes lack a sense of love toward a child, but they have an inability to convey love to the child.

### **The Components of Love**

I will argue in this section that the reason philosophers have discussed parental obligations to love children is that so many parents appear to have an absence of love for their children. When parents abuse, neglect and/or fail to provide adequate care for their children, we have typically assumed that this has been caused by a lack of love. If parents are commanded to love their children therefore, we can presume that this will counteract the problem of a lack of love. I will suggest however that assuming that a lack of love comes with an absence of parental loving interactions is a misguided assumption. I will argue that the problem is not that many parents do not love their children and are therefore in need of being commanded to love, but rather they have an inability to convey the love they feel to their children. This indicates that there are two components of love - emotional and action elements – which can be separated; an idea that became evident in Liao's and Cowden's discussions.

While Solomon (1990) states that 'Love is an emotion, nothing else' (p. 34), Mullin (2007) rejects the idea that love is an emotion at all. She says that love is not an emotion, desire, or attitude; rather that it is 'a feature of our volitional nature – a matter of what is important to us, or what we care about deeply' (p. 384). Given both authors write about love, it is interesting that they have such divergent views about its essential nature. It also suggests there a lack of investigation and analysis of what constitutes love in general. What we do know about parental love however, is that it drives parents to care for their children in ways that they could not have imagined prior to the birth of their first child.

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<sup>16</sup> See Fredrickson (2009) who discusses the evidence from various experiments based in repetitive training and cognitive behavioural therapy.

Philosopher Solheim argues that we should not accept that parents love their children when they repeatedly abuse, neglect or provide inadequate care (Solheim 1999). She argues that:

Parents who have a pattern of ignoring their children do not, in general, act with their children's interests at heart. A workaholic parent, or a parent whose combined work and outside interests regularly squeeze out a child to the point of neglect, displays attitudes and behaviours that are incompatible with love (p. 14).

Solheim is right to say that such behaviour is incompatible with love. She also says that 'when patterns of destructive attitudes and behaviours are unreflectively taken as consistent with love' that this 'kind of usage renders the term "love" meaningless' (Solheim 1999, p. 14). However, while I do not mean to imply that we ought to accept that destructive behaviours can be associated with the act of loving children, I argue that it is also not right to assert that parents who behave in such ways do not love their children. Parents almost always do feel the emotion of love for their children, and want to raise them well; the problem lies not with an absence of the emotion of love but, I posit, with an inability to convey their love to their children successfully. In my limited and anecdotal experience working with families for ten years as a social worker, I have found that the most neglectful and abusive parents will say that they love their children, and I believe they do feel the emotion of love for their children yet can act in abusive and careless ways. Even if we were to decide therefore that parents have a duty to love their children, the problem would not be solved as it is an *apparent* lack of love, not an *actual* lack of love that is at issue.

Abusive and careless parents lack knowledge of how to outwardly convey their love to their children, as well as being unable to understand that some of their behaviours might negate any love they may have expressed. In other words, the emotional aspect of love that they feel has become separated from the active aspect of loving (perhaps accounting for the differing definitions of love discussed above). While some parents may experience the emotion that is associated with the feeling of love, the volition that is stimulated by the emotional aspect of love fails to generate substantive caring behaviours, so the two aspects of love come apart. While a parent may feel internally that they love their children, they remain unaware that they are not delivering the kinds of goods that usually accompany the feeling of love. There is therefore a problem with the expression of the emotion of love. Looking to a synthesis of the ideas and evidence outlined in Chapters One and Two, we can



conclude that without the communication of love to infants they will not gain secure attachment. Love is what is communicated every time a parent responds sensitively, calmly, and gently to the needs of their infant. It is conveyed during the repair phase of disregulation. It is conveyed during loving eye contact. It is conveyed during the playful to and fro interactions between parent and infant. It is conveyed during unrushed suckling at the breast. These are the factors which enable the infant to gain a sense of security, and are the kinds of behaviours generally flowing from the parental volition to care. Conversely, actions which cause fear, despite the presence of some of the markers of love, will negate any love - and the perception of the child will be of a lack of love. Mullin (2007) explains the process well:

When we love, we are willing to suppress other inclinations in the service of love- although not all other inclinations, for we may (and ideally will) love several different things and people. When we love we may not always succeed in suppressing more immediate and conflicting impulses, but repeated failure to suppress conflicting impulses is a mark that love is not present (p. 385).

Research has shown that it is indeed the repetition of interactions that over time produces an all-encompassing feeling in the infant of either security or insecurity, and with it a sense of being loved or not being loved. Parents who outwardly act without loving volition do not usually understand that the ways they act toward their infant fail to express their love and may even negate it. As discussed in Chapter Two, given that large numbers of children do not have secure attachment, we can deduce that many parents do not know how to convey love. What I suggest such parents need is not a command to love their children but guidance which will help them to understand how love is conveyed to their infants and older children.

In view of the lack of academic philosophical material that dissects parental love, I will briefly turn to Erich Fromm (1961) who argues in *The Art of Loving* that love is much more than a 'pleasant sensation' (p. 1); it is an art – an art that requires theory and practice (p. 5). Fromm argues that the necessary steps in learning an art are first 'mastery of the theory' and second, 'mastery of the practice' (Fromm 1961). Similarly, in a recent novel about love by populist philosopher Alain de Botton (2016), he describes love as a 'skill, not just an enthusiasm' (p. 198). Both authors appear to agree that that love is not just something that happens; rather, that to successfully love another we need to acquire particular skills. Saying that one has a feeling of love for another does not in itself translate into the kind of actions

that will enable the object of our love to be aware that they are loved; rather, it requires knowledge about the skills that enables one to convey love. One author who does dissect love is Alan Soble. In *The Structure of Love*, Soble outlines what he views as the important structures of romantic love. He states these structures are exclusivity, constancy, and reciprocity. However, even if it can be argued successfully that these elements make up the structure of romantic love (and I suggest they do not, but I will not discuss it further here as it is not relevant to the case I am presenting), they cannot be argued to be structures of parental love, or at least all but one. While constancy could be argued to be part of the necessary structure of parental love, the other two structures Soble puts forward; exclusivity and reciprocity, cannot. If exclusivity were to be an aspect of parental love, then it may be argued that persons could only love one child. If reciprocity were to be an aspect of parental love then love would not be activated until the child was old enough to provide love to the parent to the same order as the parent. While I argue later in this chapter that love does work on a feedback loop from parent to infant which naturally reinforces parental love, that the immaturity of the infant and their inherent lack of sophistication of loving style ensures that their love cannot be strictly reciprocal. So I reject Soble's analysis of the structure of love.

For many however, the art of loving is naturally learned during their intimate relational experiences with their attachment figures; for others, love remains a mystery; yet the state seems to assume that all parents do know how to express their feelings of love appropriately, and that effective raising of children happens as a matter of course.

As discussed in Chapter One, abuse and neglect are often intergenerational such that parents often have not learned how it feels like to receive love, nor how it can be successfully expressed. Further, as discussed in Chapter Two, emotional regulation is required if parents are going to display sensitivity and warmth, and respond appropriately to the needs of their child. This is often what parents lack. Such parents, I argue, require support to gain an understanding of their own deficits, followed by education about the skills they need to successfully convey the love they already hold for their children. When parents fail to provide what it is their children need, as was discussed in Chapter Two, the deficits can be life-long.

In the context of my argument that the process of conveyance of love can be taught - indeed ought to be taught to parents - it could be claimed that, as long as love can be successfully conveyed by parents, it would not matter if parents did not feel the emotional aspect of love, something that Cowden above argued. Indeed, it could be argued that Kant's theory on morality would promote such a position. He believed that our actions ought to be driven by a sense of duty, rather than by our feelings, because it is in making decisions without reference to our inclinations that he thought we would find true moral worth (Kant 1785, p. 72). While Kant states that to 'help others where one can is a duty', people often derive 'inner pleasure in spreading happiness' - but, 'however amiable it may be', it has 'no genuinely moral worth' (Kant 1785, p. 69). He explains his position thus:

Suppose then that the mind of this friend of man were overclouded by sorrows of his own which extinguished all sympathy with the fate of others, but that he still had power to help those in distress, though no longer stirred by the need of others because sufficiently occupied with his own; and suppose that, when no longer moved by any inclination, he tears himself out of this deadly insensibility and does the action without any inclination for the sake of duty alone; then for the first time his action has its genuine moral worth ... he does good, not from inclination but from duty (Kant 1785, pp. 69-70).

Kant's position comes from his desire to formulate a system that will, according to Paton (1948), reflect his belief that 'a good man is one who acts on the supposition that there is an unconditioned and objective moral standard holding for all men in virtue of their rationality as human beings' (p. viii). Kant suggests that the way to be this 'good man' is to rid the self of inclination, as he is worried that any inclinations will engender behaviour that does not accord with duty, and may be subjectively derived (Kant 1785, p. 68). If we were to accept a Kantian view however, and if love were offered from a position of duty rather than inclination, then children would technically receive the goods of life they require; something Cowden also asserted was the case. On this view, if we were to rid ourselves of all inclinations, we would technically deliver all the goods that we would wish children to receive from their parents; however, we would in reality be accepting that psychopathic parents could equally deliver care to their children as truly loving parents. While I accept that Kant wishes to steer us away from selfish desires in order that we may make purer decisions, the reality is that trying to put to one side our inclination in favour of duty would be to require parents to discount their feelings of love toward their children.

What Kant's deontological approach in effect wants to put to one side are the very goods that drive our volition toward action. Emotions fuel our volition. The deep emotional desire to care generates our volition to act with kind regard. While the a deep feeling of greed may fuel the volition to act in immoral ways – the kind of activity Kant wanted to circumvent – deep feelings of love, empathy and caring drive the volition to care beyond ourselves. To place all emotionally driven volition into the same category is to be blinded to one of the greatest drivers of human wellbeing: the drive to love. Indeed, the science I have explored in the writing of this thesis has shown that the most important health-giving aspect of life is the acquisition of the social and emotional skills that enable us to be comfortably in the company of others – the kind of skills that are developed by the parental ability to convey their love and that enable us to thrive and flourish.

Austin states that 'given the moral worth of children ... we should want them to flourish' (p. 110), a desire that I believe almost all parents have for their children. This expectation comes not from a duty to love, but from a deep, emotional feeling generated by the biological mechanisms that drive human beings to love and protect. That love is not all one way – parent to child – however; the child, when loved, reflects love back to the parent in an ever-expanding, loving loop, a topic I will explore next.

### **Expansiveness of Love**

We have established that love is the ingredient that drives parents to care for their children, often in ways they have not previously experienced. Nonetheless, love does not operate in a one-way direction - simply being provided to children. Indeed, I will argue as discussed in Chapter Four that it is something that is expressed to our children and then reflected back to us. Mullin (2007) holds a similar view, which I will explore. I will also explore the components of love, utilizing the ideas of Thich Nhat Hanh (2007), and will argue that comprehending the elements of love enables us to understand precisely what we need to convey to our children. Finally, I will argue that love operates in a natural feedback loop which expands between parent and child. I will argue that it is this expansive quality that ensures parents repeatedly provide a level of nurturing to their infants that confers a sense of belonging, a sense of security, and a sense of worthiness. It is this transference of

worthiness and belonging which distinguishes parents (and other attachment figures) from others who can simply care for our children.

Mullin (2007) asserts that the relationship between parents and young children has tended to be characterised in a misguided way. She states that parental relationships with their children have been regarded

... both in occasional philosophical discussion and in contemporary popular culture, as relationships in which loving parents strive, or ought to strive, to meet children's needs, and in which loving children appreciate, or ought to appreciate, having their needs met. This understanding is one in which relationships between young and their parents are seen as dominantly or exclusively vertical (with parents operating at a level above and quite distinct from that of their children, because of their power and authority, on the one hand, and children's dependency and vulnerability on the other hand). Children are thought to receive, rather than also sharing and giving, and parents to give, rather than also sharing and receiving (2007, p. 383).

Mullin is right to highlight the view that parental love has tended to be cast as one directional, where the perception prevails of the separate individual supplying certain goods to another and then retreating to their individual world. This one way view can account for the reason for ideas about duties and obligations to children being dominant in the philosophical literature. We tend to give little consideration to what it is parents may receive in return for their expressions of love. Mullin (2007) refers to this view of love as vertical, stating that it offers 'an incomplete and one-sided view' of love which does

... not respect children's need and ability to give love and care, and parents need to receive them from their children. They also ignore elements of mutuality and sharing which are and should be another important horizontal aspect of such relationships (p. 383).

While I do not agree that Mullin has used the right terminology to describe the differing dimensions of love, I do agree that it is necessary to view love as multidirectional. It is the mutuality and sharing that is of significance. Love works to self-generate and to expand between loving people. As I explained in Chapter Two, neuroscientists sometimes refer to the way mothers and their infants interaction as the 'dyadic dance', a pleasurable state in which neural patterning grows positive pathways which facilitate many other positive functions in the brain. Parents, it can be argued, derive as much pleasure from such interactions as infants – as was shown in measures of oxytocin levels in parents, as well as in infants, in Chapter Two.

Thich Nhat Hanh (2007), in *Teachings on Love*, offers an explanation of the kinds of facets of love that are being expressed during loving exchanges, facets that Buddhists believe should be actively practised in order to generate and expand love. There are four facets or elements that are involved in this practice: loving kindness, compassion, equanimity, and joy. Nhat Hanh (2007) describes these four elements as

... *maitre* - loving kindness (the desire to offer happiness); *karuna* – compassion (the desire to remove suffering from the other person); *mudita* – joy (the desire to bring joy to people around you, and allowing their happiness to bring you joy); and *upeksha*, equanimity (the desire to accept everything and not to discriminate) (p. 2).

When parents look at each of these aspects of loving practice, they may recognise that their deep, abiding love reflects each of these components. They are not static dispositions, but require an active attitude. They are dispositions we wish to share with our offspring, just as they are dispositions that we would wish our children to embrace in their dealings with others. It is interesting that they are similar to the characteristics of Maslow's self-actualisers, as discussed in Chapter One. These are the elements that both enable parents to convey their loving feelings to their children, and create the conditions that enable children to thrive psychologically.

If infants and children did not respond positively to their parents' interactions, there would be no positive reinforcement of their parental behaviour, and, though love may still exist, it would not expand and grow as it would with the continual reinforcement provided in multidirectional loving interactions. When the parent 'reads' that the infant is having a pleasurable interaction with them, the parent is more likely to re-engage in this behaviour. Narvaez calls this companionship care or companionship attachment, occurring at its richest in instances where the parent plays with the infant, sharing intentions, interests and 'affective appraisals' (Narvaez 2014, p. 86). Such playful interactions, Narvaez asserts, encourage a sense of belonging and a feeling that all is right with the world. She points out however that 'the adult must be ready to play ... it does not occur if there is pain, fear or anger. If distracted or in a negative mood, the adult may not respond to the child's bids for play' (Narvaez 2014, p. 100). In such instances there is no growth of love, no expanding, and no taking pleasure in the other.

Fromm (Fromm 1961) asserts that when there is an absence of love, people experience separateness and anxiety (p. 8):

Being separate means being cut off, without any capacity to use my human powers. Hence to be separate means to be helpless, unable to grasp the world - things and people – actively: it means that the world can invade me without my ability to react. Thus, separateness is the source of intense anxiety. Beyond that, it arouses shame and the feeling of guilt (p. 8).

Fromm (1961) claims that ‘the deepest need of man then is the need to overcome his separateness, to leave the prison of his aloneness’ (p. 9). If we review Fromm’s statements in tandem with the neuroscientific data discussed in Chapter Two, the research tells us that infants are hardwired to connect, to be one with another who provides the loving environment that we crave. Neuroscientists also corroborate Fromm’s views, arguing that, without loving connectedness with another, infants will experience fear and anxiety; when babies are nurtured well on the other hand they will grow up with a sense of connectedness. This is the element that appears to be central to mental wellbeing. When we develop with an undeniable sense of connectedness, we enter the world with a feeling of belonging, never doubting that we ought to be here.

When attachment figures love and engage with their infants, and a companionship orientation develops with habituated playful, egalitarian, and responsive elements, it leads to an engagement ethic. Narvaez (2014) states that the engagement ethic in turn ‘comprises capacities such as social pleasure, presence, reverence, synchrony and intersubjectivity, empathy, mentalizing and perspective taking’ (p. 106). When family members can engage on such a level, they embody an attitude which can be described as one ‘of affection, rather than one of laws or rules’, an attitude that Narvaez suggests supplies an ‘ethic of love’ or a ‘sense of bondedness to the other as part of the self’ (2014, p. 119):

Through presence, reverence, and synchrony, loving attitudes and behaviour provide the optimal development niche. Parents unconditionally love the child and the child loves them back. Through loving experience the child builds emotion systems that form her values; she learns the value of relationships and community, empathy and compassion (p. 120).

Knowing the value of relationships, and having empathy and compassion, characteristics discussed in Chapter One, are necessary to the development of our capacities for flourishing. They also naturally encourage the development of moral sensitivity, learned through the

patterning that Narvaez describes. Though Kant believed that moral capacities are best displayed when acting from 'duty alone' rather than from inclination, I have shown that it is through the ebb and flow of loving interactions that the foundations of moral behaviour are actually built. Mullin (2007) rightly states that it is in the simultaneous 'giving and receiving love and care, and the value of mutuality', that interest is fostered in another's 'point of view', leading to 'an enhanced appreciation of the personhood of others' (p. 392).

This understanding of the 'personhood of others' is the fundamental ingredient that loving reciprocation instils in us at a very early age, prior to the development of our verbal and many of our other cognitive capacities. I assert therefore that engaging in loving relationships with infants and children predisposes both the parent and the child toward a consideration of themselves in reference to the other, in the first instance.

Loving children in a collaborative way not only conveys love to children, but, I have established, provides the goods that children need in order to flourish and to become moral beings. I suggest that these ideas direct us to discard Blustein and Archard's argument discussed in Chapter One that good enough parenting is adequate for children. The proper communication of love necessarily requires parents to supply more than is deemed good enough, not because they feel beholden to their infants and children, but because the proper delivery of love sees them willingly submerge themselves in the intimate to and fro of interactions with their children, prior to any analysis of what it is they may be giving or sacrificing.

Thus love does operate in a natural feedback loop which expands between parent and child, entwining them on an emotional as well as on a physical level. I suggest that the infinity symbol offers a good visual metaphor for how love works. It reflects this expansive quality that ensures parents repeatedly provide a level of nurturing to their infants which enables children to develop the kind of foundational social, emotional, and moral wellbeing that they need to flourish - and it is these nurturing qualities that only someone who deeply loves their infant can bring constantly to their own offspring that differentiates parents and other attachment figures from those who may be required to care for our child. It is too much to expect others to love our children as we do. Others have not undergone the physiological processes that drive our love for our particular child; therefore, the most we



can expect is that they care for the child with respect and sensitivity. I have shown however that babies require more than care delivered with respect and sensitivity during infancy. It may well be enough once the foundational neural networks have been established toward the end of the infancy period; however, until that time, infants need to be cared for by someone with the volition that only love can generate in order that they may receive responsive, enduring, warm, constant and loving nurturing. This is why parents, and mothers in particular, need to undertake the nurturing of their children during the critical phase of infancy. In the absence of attachment parenting, it is much more likely that a child will develop some of the pathologies of which Fromm speaks. When parental love is conveyed well, however, the infant will develop the kind of neural patterning that will provide them with the foundations of social, emotional and moral wellbeing, foundations which will sustain their development toward that of a flourishing individual.

## **Conclusion**

In this chapter I have argued that love is fundamental to the parental ability to provide the essential conditions for flourishing. I argued that love is the ingredient that enables parents to give of themselves to the degree that they are able to provide continually for their children over many years. I argued that children ought to grow up in an environment that can instil a feeling of belonging, love, and happiness. I also argued that, while there is little dispute that love is good for children, there is some debate about how *much* love is fair for parents to have to provide. I discussed Archard (2003, 2015b), Austin (2007), and Blustein's (1982) ideas in regard to parental love. The reason I have argued that love needs to be discussed is that without an understanding that it has two essential components - emotions, and through our emotions the volition that drives us to care - we run the risk of holding a somewhat clinical and limited view of the parent/child relationship.

I discussed and examined Liao (2006a; 2006b), Solheim (Solheim 1999), and Cowden's (2012) positions that questioned whether parents have a duty to love their children. Liao and Solheim argued that parents *do* have a duty to love their children, while Cowden argued that people cannot be *commanded* to love. Solheim, on the other hand, suggested that, in lieu of not being able to command parents to love their children, parents should at least be required to 'try' to love their children. I argued that the main reason philosophers have

deliberated upon the possibility of commanding someone to love is that high numbers of children appear to be unloved, that is, those who are abused, neglected or provided with inadequate care. I further argued that what is often interpreted as a lack of parental love is actually an inability to actively convey love. I posited that love has two major components – emotional and active components – and that these elements can be separated; therefore, it is possible to love a child but to act in ways that are contrary to what we would normally judge to be loving in their intent. The problem is that most parents assume that if they feel love for their child that child will know they are loved; so, rather than discussing whether we should command parents to love their children, I argued that we need to support parents to learn how to convey the love they feel to their children. I also claimed that, on the assumption that we can successfully teach parents *how* to love, it could be argued that as long as we are able to *convey* love it does not matter if we actually *feel* it or not. I asserted that this is essentially a Kantian position. I concluded however that such a view would invariably lead to the view that psychopathic parents could provide the same loving conditions as truly loving parents, a view that I inevitably rejected.

I asserted that love operates *between* people, and, that when parents see the love they convey reflected from their loved infant back to them, their love is expanded and renewed, stimulating the continued expression of their love toward their infant. This reflecting of one to the other, I argued, becomes a self-sustaining feedback loop. I also described, as the feedback loop metaphor suggests, how parents experience the expansiveness of love: the more love they display, the more love is conveyed to the child and the more the child grows the love within, learning the essential mechanisms of turn-taking, respect for the other, and empathy with the other. This process, I have argued, culminates in the infant developing a sense of belonging and a sense of security in their attachment. It is this expanded sense of self, a sense of self that grows through the provision of love, which, I suggested, is the essential foundation for understanding the other, for developing the capacity for empathy, and for engaging in moral behaviour. Finally, I argued that the love that grows within each infant/parent pairing is unique to them. Each parent's unique relationship with their own child ensures that the parent will continually provide the kind of experiences to them that maintain a high level of nurturing. I argued that it is too much to expect that others should, or even ought to provide the kind of care that parents do, as others bodies have not

undergone the physiological changes which would ensure they too could love the child in the way mothers in particular do. The physiological changes that take place in both the mother and the infant privilege mothers in nurturing their own children in the most facilitative way.

## ***Chapter 7 - Policy Issues***

In this Chapter, I will turn to the practical implications that arise if we are to take seriously the normative claims of this thesis – that mothers should dedicate at least the first 18 months of their children’s lives to intensive nurturing. In this chapter I will principally do two things. The first, and my main task, is to show that the state has certain responsibilities. I will argue that it falls to the state to respond to the claims I am making. As the mental wellbeing of the next generation is at stake here, the research I have detailed ought to be taken seriously. The second task of this chapter is to suggest how these state responsibilities might be met. I acknowledge that what I will say in this regard is outside the scope of my expertise; nonetheless, it is important to offer recommendations that may usefully prompt further discussion and exploration about the issues at hand. This issue is secondary aspect to the first task of this chapter however.

I will first discuss the role of the state, and why we have come to assume that it is the state’s responsibility to deal with significant issues. I will remind the reader of the discussion about liberalism in Chapter Three, where I explored the ideology behind three important philosophical positions, including Mill’s position which advocated that public policy be driven toward the greatest happiness principle. I will argue that Mill’s thinking, along with the view that the state’s responsibility is to ensure the safety and interests of its citizens, lead to the conclusion that the state is the appropriate body to effect the kinds of changes that I have proposed in this thesis. I will argue that public policy needs to address the many difficulties that women face in electing to take on the full-time nurturing role that is motherhood. Since a child’s experience during infancy has such a great bearing on the level of wellbeing of the adult they will become, it is in the best interests of the state, to find solutions to the dilemmas that I have outlined. Unless the state does address such issues, it will continue to inadequately attend to the psychological wellbeing of its citizens.

I will argue that most Western countries place primary emphasis on economic expansion as the source of wellbeing in society. I suggest that equal importance ought to be given to the support of policies which can psychologically enhance people’s lives. I will also argue that, if

the state does not attend to the issues I have raised above, it may stymie a mother's ability to provide optimal nurturing, compromising the wellbeing of both her and her infant, and thereby depleting the wellbeing of future citizens. In a thesis in applied ethics, I submit that it is necessary to address real world issues arising from proposals such as this. It is this concern with real world issues which distinguishes this thesis from more analytical discourses.

I will list each of the central issues which represent barriers to mothers undertaking the nurturing of their infants full-time, and detail why each of these issues represents a problem. They include the negative effects associated with taking time out of the workforce; the lack of remuneration and superannuation; the lack of pathways supporting parents to acquire knowledge about optimally supporting their infant's psychological wellbeing; the lack of value and status associated with motherhood; and the lack of support associated with the nuclear family in today's society.

I will then make suggestions as to how we might go about developing and implementing solutions to each of the impediments to the undertaking of full-time maternal work that are listed above. Such solutions will involve policy change to accommodate and adjust to new measures. While I will suggest that it is within the purview of the state to directly supply mothers with the kinds of financial, social and emotional supports they require, however, I will also argue that the supports I have called for ought to be delivered to parents through community centres or neighbourhood houses, rather than being directly delivered by the state.

## **The State**

As I have claimed several times throughout the thesis, the state has certain responsibilities to its citizens. I will therefore examine the extent of the state's obligations, and briefly discuss liberalism's influence on the state. I will also argue that the state has a responsibility to address the normative claims I have made, and to attend to the issues which arise from these claims. It appears however that many states believe the overall wellbeing of their citizens are best served by advancing the economic wealth of those states. I will argue that, given the evidence I have presented showing that the psychological wellbeing of people is

vitality important to the way they function in society, the state ought to give as much consideration to the psychological wellbeing of its citizens as it gives to economic considerations.

In Chapter Three I discussed liberalism, presenting an outline of three philosophers' views that I said were representative of some broad, moral philosophical standpoints. Mill in particular advocated convincingly for governments to act on behalf of citizens with a view to ensuring that their political decisions had regard for the greatest happiness of the population. Nozick, on the other hand, advocated absolute individualism. I suggested that governments in the West have largely followed a mixture of liberalist ideas.

According to Paul Gilbert (2005), the state is 'The political organization of a body of people for the maintenance of order within its territory by coercion, or more loosely, the body of people so organized or its territory' (p. 893). In modern Western democracies there is little need for coercion; rather, most submit to engaging in voting systems and agree to be governed by those who have been elected to govern. There is little doubt that the maintenance of order is a necessary element of such compliance, an element that has ensured its continued acceptance. But there is another essential task for the state – that it promotes its citizens best interests. Archard (2003) says that it may be 'naïve or simply false to think that the state always' ought to 'provide public goods and promote the public interest', yet 'in ideal theory at least it ought' to act in this way (p. 118). It is with this ideal expectation that the state does involve itself in the provision of many public services.

Archard says that

... the creation of a transport and communications infrastructure, the protection of the environment, the maintenance of law and order, the provision of national defence and the promotion of public health all lie within the remit of the state (p. 118).

In part it is the state's interest in public health that sets a precedent for assessing new knowledge claims of the kinds I am making. Mental health is a significant issue in Australia and other Western countries, as I discussed in the introduction to this thesis. Poor mental wellbeing is also associated with many physical problems. If we are to promote wellbeing in general in society therefore, as the promotion of maternal caring does, then the state

clearly has a role to play in changing policy in response to new information about the antecedents of mental wellbeing.

Unfortunately, while most Western countries may well declare that concern for the wellbeing of their citizens is paramount in their governance policies, most of them appear to believe that personal wellbeing hinges on the economic growth of their country. The majority of governmental policy discussions apparently being made primarily in reference to economic policy demonstrates the point. It is also fair to say that there appears to be a belief in the ideological liberal position that imagines human maturation can be recognised in the self-sufficient, separate individual, a position discussed at length in chapters Three, Four, and Five. Adherence to this liberal position may promote, inadvertently or otherwise, policies which focus on wealth creation. Western governments tend to embrace capitalism in the belief that ever-growing markets will increase overall economic wealth, that this wealth will filter down to all citizens, and that it alone offers the recipe for happiness. This belief ensures that governments place more emphasis on material success than on the emotional health and wellbeing of their citizens.

In their report, *The Australia We Want: First Report*, Crosbie and Marjolin (2016) state that:

Most debates about Australia's future have been limited by a seemingly myopic fixation on the type of economy to be achieved. Australians are more than individual tax paying economic units. Our productivity, innovation, skills and achievements are actually grounded in flourishing communities within our schools, workplaces, families and local neighbourhoods (p. 8).

Crosbie and Marjolin rightly highlight that we can only act capably when there exists a wealth of robust local structures to support us. As discussed in Chapters One and Five, the health of individuals is to be found in people's engagement with others in their communities, and in their participation in those communities. On this view, and in consideration of the empirical neuroscientific and psychological evidence, it seems misguided to be putting our faith in economic drivers to offer the formula for achieving the wellbeing of our citizens. While a certain level of wealth is without doubt important to a person's ability to clothe, feed and house themselves and their families, once they have the income to do this ever greater wealth does not equate to ever greater levels of overall happiness, as I have previously discussed. Authors of the *World Happiness Report 2016*, Helliwell, Huang, and Wang (2016), state that there are great discrepancies between the happiness levels of

people in different countries that cannot be attributed to simply looking at differences in the levels of gross domestic product (GDP).

Helliwell, Huang, and Wang revealed that measuring happiness was a complex task requiring the assessment of many factors, including social support and healthy life expectancy, as well as measures of GDP. While generally inconclusive as to the exact constituents of happiness, Helliwell, Huang, and Wang's (2016) report showed that wealth was only one contributor to a sense of happiness and wellbeing. They argued that 'subjective well-being' provided a 'broader and more inclusive measure of the quality of life' than did income' (p. 41). Diener et al's (2010) research produced similar findings. While they stated that income was 'strongly associated with the life evaluation form of well-being', and although 'statistically significant, the association of income with positive and negative feelings was modest' (p. 60), they said that

... we also discovered that social psychological prosperity is very important to positive feelings. Some nations that do well in economic terms do only modestly well in social psychological prosperity ... At the theoretical level, our results indicate that different types of well-being can be influenced by very different predictors. It is important to note that social psychological well-being is shown to be an important correlate of feelings across the globe. At the policy level, our findings indicate that more than money is needed for quality of life, and the social psychological forms of prosperity correlate only moderately with economic development. This means that societies must pay careful attention to social and psychological variables, not simply to enlarging their economies. Our findings indicate that it is important for societies not only to measure economic variables but to measure social psychological well-being variables as well (pp. 60-61).

Diener et al's and Helliwell, Huang, and Wang's findings echo the discussion about happiness at the beginning of this thesis, which looked at its psychological markers. While there is evidence to show that some level of monetary wealth is necessary for a happy life, there are other substantial factors at play. Bowlby in particular was highly scathing of Western society in its consistent promotion of economic need over wellbeing:

Man and woman power devoted to the production of material goods counts a plus in all our economic indices. Man and woman power devoted to the production of happy, healthy, and self-reliant children in their own homes does not count at all. We have created a topsy turvy world ... The society we live in is ... in evolutionary terms ... a very peculiar one. There is a great danger that we shall adopt mistaken norms. For just as a society in which there is a chronic insufficiency of food may take a deplorably inadequate level of nutrition as its norm, so may a society in which



parents of young children are left on their own with a chronic insufficiency of help take this state of affairs as its norm (1988, pp. 2-3).

I suggest that a Western emphasis on economics has seen us seduced into thinking that it is monetary wealth that holds the key to happiness, rather than the way humans interrelate. Not only have Western governments focused on wealth creation, but have emphasised this focus in such a way that it has served to devalue activities that do not generate income, especially activities that act as an impediment to wealth creation. It could be argued that one such activity is the impediment children may represent in the cause of adult wealth accumulation, an antidote for which has been the growth of the childcare industry. While this may seem an unnecessarily harsh assessment, Scarre reminds us that the historical Western perspective of children in general has been quite abrasive, as discussed in Chapter Three. Scarre (2010) says that such an attitude has had a lasting effect:

Children are remarkable for their lovingness, spontaneity and freshness of vision, their candour and imagination. To complain that they do not perform as well as adults at tasks more suitable for adults is to apply ludicrously inappropriate standards. Yet children in the writings of philosophers and others have usually been characterised in such adult-oriented fashion, with very negative and dismissive results. To think of children primarily as weak, ignorant, irrational, incompetent, unrestrained and uncivilised impedes working up much interest in how they are treated, and makes it easier to fall into an unquestioning, complacent acceptance of whatever social, educational and political arrangements have arisen to cope with them (p. x).

While it has been some years since the worst of the disrespect for and disregard of children was apparent, the residual idea that we have simply needed to 'cope' with them, I suggest, has resulted in there being little inquiry as to the real needs of infants in particular. It is assumed that children can simply fit in with existing family priorities, rather than families orienting their requirements to the needs of their infants and children. Consequently, what I have shown to be the most influential factor of human happiness and wellbeing, that is, how we relate to others, needs to have greater importance in the state's agenda.

It is true to say, and important to acknowledge, however that, while government policy is primarily directed toward economic improvement, as I have argued, there are also many programs that are funded by the redistribution of economic gains. Australian children and their parents, for instance, benefit from governmental policies such as a free medical system that is able to provide for routine and emergency medical services, universal

education for children aged between 5 and 17 years, fire, emergency, and policing services, roads and other infrastructure, as well as a myriad of other less universal programs. The Australian Government also funds a payment system for the unemployed, a pension system for those who cannot work, payments to low income families to bring their incomes closer to what is considered a reasonable economic standard, and subsidised child care. While the health care system in Australia is arguably well funded, the funding is supplied in response to ill-health needs, rather than being aimed at prevention of ill-health. There are numerous programs and services that are government-funded and directed at wellbeing, such as fitness programs for the elderly, playgroups for families, and school breakfast programs, to name a few; however, these programs are funded on an ad hoc basis. In Australia, there is no overarching, comprehensive plan or objective which considers the conditions that support the wellbeing of citizens as a whole, no plan that seeks to support their attaining such wellbeing.

Bhutan is one nation that does things differently, gauging the wellbeing of its citizens in terms of Gross National Happiness (GNH) rather than Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Sithey, Thow & Mu (2015) explain the philosophy behind this new way of assessing how well the country as a whole is doing. They state that

... gross national happiness has several dimensions: it is holistic, recognizing people's spiritual, material, physical or social needs; it emphasizes balanced progress; it views happiness as a collective phenomenon; it is both ecologically sustainable, pursuing wellbeing for both current and future generations, and equitable, achieving a fair and reasonable distribution of well-being among people (p. 514).

Measuring citizens' levels of happiness via these kinds of indicators may well be useful in helping governments to focus on, and think more carefully about, the psychological wellbeing of their citizens. By comparison, typical liberalist economies are built on the premise that as long as people have access to resources such as education, a particular level of income, health services, and opportunities to work, all within the purview of the state, then the state has fulfilled its obligation to its citizens.

As I have discussed, however, the state must be open to changing its policies when faced with new knowledge showing that they are no longer serving the best interests of its citizens. In this case, as research shows that the foundational building blocks of society are citizens with high levels of wellbeing, the state should therefore both facilitate the nurturing

of infants by their mothers for the first 18 months of their infants' lives, and should act to confront the problems which are a barrier to this possibility. This is a national issue, and only the state has the power and the capacity to make the necessary changes I am recommending. In the following section I will list each of the main issues which act as impediments to full-time nurturing.

## **Practical Problems**

I will list in this section each of the central, practical problems which, I will assert, act to stymie mothers' wishes to nurture their infants full-time, even when mothers are only contemplating doing this for a short period of their life. I have asserted previously that, in order for people to become flourishing individuals, they need optimal brain functioning, stimulated when infants are immersed in a loving, dyadic environment where they can develop secure attachment with a loved and loving other. I have argued that the attachment figure ought to be the infant's mother where possible, that mothers (or another primary attachment figure) ought to stay home with the infant for at least the first eighteen months of their infant's life, and thereafter children ought to be with an attachment figure until they are three years of age. There are several problematic issues arising from this assertion, however. I will recap, outlining the issues arising from this assertion which I have flagged in previous chapters, issues which act as barriers to the fulfilment of my normative claims. These include: loss of career; loss of income; loss of superannuation; lack of status in mothering; and lack of avenues for parents to acquire knowledge about nurturing that would be valuable to their parenting practice. Later I will make some suggestions as to how each of these issues may be remedied.

### **Career**

One of the most obvious issues arising from the suggestion that mothers ought to take time out of the paid workforce is that this requires women to take time away from their career for a time. Time away from one's career certainly has its downsides. In Australia, for instance, teachers are deregistered if they take more time away from teaching than is deemed permissible. There may also be the real worry that there may be new developments in a woman's area of employment of which she will not be aware, thus returning to work with a deficit of knowledge - an obvious disadvantage.

The negativity associated with taking time out is not only due to the consequences of absence from the workplace, but is also associated with the presumption that what women do when spending time with their infants has no value, and worse, that it carries no benefit when women return to the paid workplace. Yet, as Held (1993) articulates:

It is mothering persons and children who turn biological entities into human social entities through their interactions. It is mothers and mothering persons who create children and construct with and for the child the human social reality of the child (p. 70).

This juxtaposition represents the heart of the issue of this thesis. Someone has to undertake the role of raising children; yet if mothers are to undertake the role they will be penalised by taking time away from their career. In addition, there is the perception of the loss of autonomy (which I discussed at length in Chapter Five, arguing that, when repositioned, and viewed as social autonomy, it can be viewed positively), and its corollary, the gaining of a dependency.

## **Remuneration**

Then there is the issue of financial dependency which raises many issues, as I discussed in Chapter Four. In a world where women are used to having monetary independence prior to childbirth, it can be confronting to be faced with both the loss of income and the acquisition of a dependent relationship on another. It can also be confronting for men to have to share what has previously been theirs alone – their income. Pressure to return to work can therefore come from partners who do not want to take on the sole responsibility of earning. Moreover, this financial dependence of women on their partners has often been historically associated with a power differential between men and women, where male ownership over women and children was a prevalent notion (Rich 1976, p. 64). While sharing within the family, including the sharing of monetary resources, is part of living interdependently and lovingly, as I described in Chapter Five, a reduction in family income can reduce good intent within that family, impinging on its members' wellbeing.

Yet, levels of income and poverty must also invariably have an impact on many women's decisions to return to work. While this is not so much the case in Australia for instance because of parental payment support structures, it is much more problematic in countries such as the USA. Without equivalent parental payments, nationally provided health care

system, or nationally paid parental leave, and combined with lower wage structures, after childbirth parents in the US are less likely to be able to afford to take time out of the workforce. This seems to be particularly the case in sole parent families (Crittenden 2001; Lerner 2010; Warren & Tyagi 2004). Yet, according to Warren and Tyagi (2004) earning a second income in families that have two residential parents does not necessarily avert poverty. In *The Two Income Trap*, Warren and Tyagi explain how earning a second income when families have children and the associated costs of housing them, paying for childcare, education, and healthcare, that families are often no better off financially. Warren and Tyagi's research into bankruptcy data showed that few were chronically poor. They state

When membership in the middle class is defined by enduring criteria ... such as going to college, owning a home, or having held a good job – more than 90 percent of those in bankruptcy would qualify as middle class. By every measure except their balance sheets, the families in our study are as solidly middle class as any in the country. And they are united by another common thread: Most of these families sent two parents into the workforce (2004, p. 7).

Yet some families despite the financial difficulties they currently experience do what is necessary to subsist on one income so they can adhere to their belief in the value of raising their own children. Allgood Berry et al (2014) discuss the outcome of their study which investigated the reasoning mothers had for staying at home despite their low-income status and often being viewed as aberrant by the popular media. Allgood Berry et al (2014) stated

The rural, low-income mothers, who chose to stay home for their children, appeared to be resilient in managing the financial well-being of their families, were able to access the resources they needed, and stayed true to their values regarding work and caring for their children (p. 79).

Such a commitment to staying at home despite their poverty status shows that poverty does not preclude an understanding of good parenting, and that it is possible to parent well despite being poor.

## **Superannuation**

Another problem faced by women that has been negatively associated with taking time out of paid employment is the long-term financial disadvantage associated with the interruption to their superannuation payments. The foregoing of superannuation payments early in life

results in a large financial disadvantage when it comes to women's retirement. Hartnell reported in an ABC news story that 'Australian women retire with just over half the amount of super as men, and one in three women retire with no super at all' (30 Apr 2016). This is not a situation that ought to continue.

## **Education**

Another problem of great import, and one I have discussed in Chapter Two, is the absence of parental education. Research has shown that there is a strong basis for accepting attachment theory, particularly as it relates to our later emotional, social, and moral wellbeing. Similarly, neuroscience has provided evidence about the kinds of parental behaviour which will result in secure attachment. Given that many infants do not become securely attached, there is a clear need to have some means of conveying this research evidence to parents. Moreover, there ought to be some mechanism for all parents to be given evidence-based information that can support their parenting. As discussed in Chapter One, it seems odd that this is the case when this kind of information is regularly made available to certain professional groups. It seems particularly contradictory when Australia, like other Western countries, demands that teachers undertake specific, long-term training in order to teach children while, at the time of life when education has its most profound and long-term effects, that is, during infancy, parents are not provided with *any* training. The evidence I outlined in Chapter Two suggests that the result of parents getting it wrong has potentially greater deleterious effects on the infant's later life than inadequate formal education would have.

Viewed this way, it seems ludicrous that the state does not provide any standardised training or education for parents. This is particularly so when, in Australia for instance, there is a plethora of free antenatal classes available for women and men to undertake prior to the birth of their infants, classes that offer nutritional advice for pregnant women and physical preparation for childbirth. At the same time there is no advice or training for parents on how to care for their infant's emotional, social, and behavioural wellbeing after the birth of their infants, despite it having been confirmed for some thirty or so years by neuroscience that the zero to two year age group is when the greatest amount of foundational brain structuring and learning takes place. Additionally, neuroscience holds information that could be provided to parents on how they can effectively convey their love,

the importance of which was discussed in the previous chapter. Several studies have shown that supporting parents to recognise their behaviour patterning and to change them through supportive interventions have had a major positive effect on children's behaviours (Colmer, Rutherford & Murphy 2011; Horton & Murray 2015; Huber, McMahon & Sweller 2016; Letourneau et al. 2015; Marvin et al. 2002). This has been shown in many studies where groups using the Circle of Security model - which utilizes attachment theory as its underlying theoretical framework - have shown consistently beneficial outcomes for infants level of security (Colmer, Rutherford & Murphy 2011; Horton & Murray 2015; Huber, McMahon & Sweller 2016; Marvin et al. 2002). Letourneau et al (2015) conducted a 'narrative systematic review and meta-analysis' of studies to examine the effectiveness of interventions' which were aimed at 'promoting maternal sensitivity and reflective function on maternal-child attachment security' (p. 366). Letourneau et al conclude that

... interventions aimed at improving maternal sensitivity alone or in combination with maternal reflection, implemented in the first year of infants' lives, are effective in promoting secure maternal-child attachments (2015, p. 366).

And, as I have also discussed earlier, parents *want* this information. Parents are their children's principal teachers, yet in many ways they are treated as though they are simply child-minding to an age when the real learning begins. While it must be said that a variety of parenting classes do exist in Australia, these classes are offered on an ad hoc basis, and are often reserved for parents deemed 'at risk'. There is also a myriad of online advice websites; however, which of these sites provide good quality advice is difficult for parents to determine.

### **Lack of Status and Respect**

An income is also associated with status, and the opposite – having no income – thus carries no status. Women therefore experience not only an immediate loss of status because of their loss of income, but also acquire no status from their nurturing role. I think this is associated with the erroneous notion that caring for infants does not amount to work, but is rather a simple matter of minding the child. It is precisely this perception that Ruddick (1989) has sought to challenge, coining the term 'maternal work' to denote the real work that is undertaken when nurturing, as discussed in Chapter Four. Despite the fact that Ruddick highlighted the lack of value in motherhood, and the lack of recognition of the work

undertaken by mothers in 1989, there is still no official recognition of the value inherent in maternal work. Maternal work is still not included in calculations of Gross Domestic Product. Two articles have recently discussed the implications of this omission. A report entitled *Understanding the Unpaid Economy* began by asking 'Why is it that a mother caring for her children produces no 'measured' economic value, but the same mother hiring others to look after her children does?' (PwC 2017, p. 1). The report answers the question by arguing that this anomaly 'stems from our narrow measurements of 'economic activity' that currently only capture activities for which people are paid' (PwC 2017, p. 1). The authors go on:

Capturing the nature and value of unpaid activities alongside our formal industries (e.g. mining, construction, manufacturing, financial services, health care, education, etc) indicates that childcare should be regarded as Australia's largest industry. Quantifying and valuing the time spent on unpaid childcare implies that it is a \$345 billion sector (in 2011 terms), almost three times the financial and insurance services industry, the largest industry in the formal economy (PwC 2017, p. 3).

In a recent magazine article, Wertheim reports on a number of speakers heard at a feminism conference that she attended in the US. Discussing Marilyn Waring's contribution to the conference Wertheim states:

Waring noted, several revisions to the way GDP is calculated have resulted in such inclusions as the "value" of unused weapons and unexploded bombs, but have yet to extend to parenting or to breast milk, a commodity that the writer Peggy O'Mara has priced out as worth approximately \$30 billion a year to the US economy alone (Wertheim 2017).

Explained in this way it becomes increasingly evident that failure to correctly calculate and thus value the maternal work women undertake is insulting. Further, women who raise children full-time, willingly accepting a loss of income, are often characterised as having no ambition, and as women who are happy to submit to paternalism and to accept a lack of autonomy. Yet, for many women, choosing to undertake full-time motherhood reflects a heartfelt commitment to spending their time nurturing their infants, a commitment based on their belief that it is fundamentally important to the wellbeing of their infant. They are willing to make the necessary life adjustments to meet that commitment. This in no way suggests a submission to paternalistic structures.

What is more, not having an income is frequently associated with unemployment. To be faced with the view that what you have chosen to do relegates you to the ranks of the



unemployed is confronting and frustrating. To provide an anecdotal example: I found it humiliating to be asked each year by my bank to sign mortgage documentation to say I was unemployed because I was not earning an income. Every year I refused, telling the bank that I was gainfully employed nurturing my infant children. Banking officials stated that other women simply signed, implying I should do the same, and not question their construction of my situation. I told them I would sign a statutory declaration to say that as I was a full-time mother I did not earn an income, but would not sign a document to say I was unemployed. Treating me rather contemptuously, the male bank employees would reluctantly write up a document which included the wording I had requested. This was an issue I needed to re-address every financial year.

## **Family**

An issue I have discussed on a number of occasions throughout the thesis is the apparent lack of resources in nuclear families. As was noted in Chapter Three, Archard brought to our attention the fact that nuclear families are a twentieth-century phenomenon, one that has developed along with various social, economic, and demographic changes (2015b, p. 193). The size of the average Western family has therefore reduced relatively recently. In many countries in the world, and historically in the West, families were made up of multiple people in a household, most of whom contributed in various ways to other members. Such families/households had the resources to substantially support mothers and their newborn babies. It can be argued that the lack of familial supports in most families in the West today represents a contributing factor to the levels of post-natal depression.

## **Developing Solutions Through Policy**

Given that public policy is usually driven by values which change alongside changing public priorities and the absorption of new knowledge, I will argue that public policy ought to be changed to reflect the recent evidence showing that the foundations of psychological functioning are established in infancy. If it is the responsibility of the state to develop responses to address problems associated with my proposal—that mothers ought to take at least eighteen months out of the workforce to nurture their children—then it is necessary to explain how this can be accomplished on a practical level. In this section I will put forward ideas to resolve, and implement solutions to, the issues I have raised. As stated in the

introduction, this is beyond my field of expertise; however, it may be useful to explore the proposed solutions and to stimulate further discussion of the subject.

I listed above the disadvantages that may accrue to women in regard to career, loss of income, and loss of superannuation. I also detailed the lack of status and value in motherhood. I will now address how we may raise the value and status of motherhood, discuss how families may be strengthened, and consider how we can ameliorate the loss of careers, income, and superannuation. I will argue that parents must be given access to the information that is available about how they can best convey love to their children and how they can actively demonstrate it. I will advocate that this education is best supplied by communities, once they are funded by the state, as communities are best placed to offer educative and social and emotional programs to parents.

## **Career**

The solution to the possible loss of career for mothers who may take time out of the workforce for one or two years is to minimise the disadvantage caused by their absence from paid work. A number of things would need to change for this to become a reality. First, measures would need to be put in place to enable women to keep up-to-date with any new knowledge in their area of employment. This may mean that women and their employers keep communication channels open so that mothers can, from home, keep abreast of any new developments in their chosen career. Government policy can ensure that such measures be agreed upon prior to the birth of children. Government policy may also be used to incentivise employers to re-employ women returning to the workforce.

Second, the attributes developed through undertaking maternal work ought to be viewed as career-enhancing features. As I mentioned in Chapter Five, the experience of taking a few years out of the workplace to nurture infants can enhance a number of useful skills. This list of skills may include: general management skills (organising your life along with another's entire life 24 hours a day); psychological skills acquired as attachment figures learn to navigate, negotiate, listen and respond to another's unspoken interactions; expanded skills in acceptance, enhanced by attachment figures needing to accept the peculiarities of infants that are outside their control; and financial skills, motherhood usually being accompanied by a reduction in income and thus a greater need to budget.

Brighouse and Swift (2006) also argue that, as the parental role carries with it certain duties and responsibilities, it propels parents toward not only growth but a state of ‘flourishing’ (p. 95). They explain thus:

Through exercising ... capacities in the specific context of the intimately loving parent-child relationship, a parent comes to learn more about herself, she comes to develop as a person, and she derives satisfactions that otherwise would be unavailable (Brighouse & Swift 2006, p. 95).

The parental growth of which Brighouse and Swift speak invariably drives personal development, possibly even toward a flourishing state. It is this development that is of immense value in the workplace, and ought to be viewed by employers as advantageous to them. Marcel Robles (2012) argues that, while hard or technical skills are necessary in any position, so are ‘soft’ skills:

Soft skills are character traits, attitudes, and behaviors—rather than technical aptitude or knowledge. Soft skills are the intangible, nontechnical, personality-specific skills that determine one’s strengths as a leader, facilitator, mediator, and negotiator’ (p. 457).

Similarly, Hansen and Hansen argue that although each employer wants employees who can fulfil the functions that are specific to their industry, there are plenty of other commonly sought attributes. They list these attributes as: communication skills; analytical/research skills; computer/technical literacy; flexibility/adaptability/managing multiple priorities; interpersonal abilities; leadership/management skills; multicultural sensitivity/awareness; planning/organising; problem-solving/reasoning/creativity; and team work. Many of these attributes, the kinds of soft skills Robles discusses, are arguably substantially enhanced through experiences encountered in full-time parenting.

Mothers and employers coming to value full-time maternal work as a skill-enhancement vocation, would go some way to mitigating the notion that taking time away from work is a negative career move. Indeed, mothers who have spent some time embedded in a nurturing experience ought to be viewed as *more* valuable employees.

## **Remuneration**

It can be argued that the lack of value assigned to motherhood, as I previously argued in Chapter Four, is not only due to a lack of status and recognition of the vital nature of the

role, but also arises from the fact that the role is usually not remunerated. If we are to accept mothering as work, and additionally that it has immense consequences for children's long-term wellbeing as I have shown in this thesis, then I argue that one of the most important ways to elevate its importance and increase the numbers of women choosing full-time motherhood is to sufficiently remunerate it. Paying women a maternal wage, many would argue, would result in an insurmountable cost to society; however, I suggest that the cost needs to be put into context. Many kinds of caring work were formerly unpaid, such as nursing and social work, work usually undertaken by the wives of wealthy men and viewed as being delivered in the spirit of charity. In more recent times, in many traditional female jobs such as nursing, teaching, secretarial work, and social work, for instance, women have had to fight to be paid an equivalent male wage. It can be argued that, as unionised sectors of teaching and nursing have become more powerful, those professions have achieved higher wage levels. As a result, these occupations have grown in status, as have the caring roles they fill; however, the higher valuing, and thus higher wages paid for some caring occupations, have still to be conferred on other caring occupations such as low-waged social work and un-waged motherhood. It could be argued that paid maternity leave is a move toward the remuneration of full-time parenting, a recognition that infants need to spend time with a consistently available caregiver – their mother; as I have shown in this thesis is essential, however, such a wage needs to be paid to mothers for at least the first eighteen months of their child's life, and thereafter to either the mother or her partner until the child has reached the age of three years; an age at which evidence shows children are more likely to be able to cope with separations from their attachment figures.

Yet, as wages are generally paid directly to those who have provided a service or goods in a direct transaction, and there are no such goods immediately provided to society by those who undertake maternal work, that a wage cannot be claimed. One can argue however that maternal work *does* provide the most valuable goods to society: well-raised, capable citizens with the foundations from which they may flourish; therefore, the public good that is provided by mothers (or other attachment figures) who are able to nurture well is the greatest good that can be delivered to society. There is thus a moral imperative for the government to adequately resource full-time nurturing.

There may also be an economic argument for paid maternity leave. When children are not well-raised and have poor levels of wellbeing, they often require a range of costly services and supports to enable them to navigate life. The cost of paid maternity leave will be at least partly offset by a reduction in the use of such services.

It may also be argued that current childcare subsidies in Australia, which reimburse a substantial proportion of childcare fees to parents, unfairly financially disadvantage families who elect to provide the care for their own children. Childcare subsidies enable some parents to work and to retain a greater proportion of their earnings, while other parents who choose to stay home to care for their own children make no such demands on government coffers. If indeed we are to ask for a redistribution of state monies to support mothers to engage in full-time nurturing for a time, one would think that such redistribution ought to be provided to *all* families whether or not the family chooses to care for their own child or to pay someone else to do the care-taking. As I have determined that children are most advantaged by having their mothers at home for the first eighteen months to two years of their lives, there is good reason to demand a redistribution of financial goods that will incentivise mothers (if not, then partners) to nurture full-time for this critical period of time. All costs associated with the provision of such a wage, would, I suggest, be recouped in the long-term, as fewer ameliorative services would be required over time. It is simply a matter of fairness that mothers undertaking such important work are supported.

Recently there has been increasing interest in the idea of states supplying a universal basic income (UBI). The suggestion is that, in a world where the resources of nations are increasingly quarantined by the wealthy, and where employment options are diminishing, that there ought to be a universal wage paid to all citizens. Although this wage is proposed for *all* citizens, Bueskens (23/2/2017) states that such a wage would significantly reduce the disparities experienced by mothers:

So, often when we're talking about *women's* lower labour force participation and lower earnings, we're actually talking about *mothers'* lower labour force participation and lower earnings and, more specifically again, we're talking about mothers with dependent children; although the lasting effects of caring labour means women across the spectrum have reduced earnings, assets and retirement savings if they have mothered. ... With the liberalisation of markets and marriage, a large and growing body of women and children are being left out of the social contract. Basic income is the critical policy answer to this problem (23/2/2017).

The provision of a UBI could well be part of the answer to enabling women to stay at home full-time with their infants, for eighteen months and/or a partner until three years - without great financial disadvantage - while at the same time enabling infants to have access to their most important teachers. It would also support an attachment figure whether that continues to be the mother or partner, to stay at home nurturing until the end of the infants third year of life as I have also been advocating. Whichever way an income for mothers and/or partners is to be achieved, it would result in society benefiting from having healthier, more cooperative, more inventive, and more socially autonomous citizens.

## **Superannuation**

I argued above that a lack of superannuation payments also acts as a disadvantage to mothers when they take time out of the paid workforce. The antidote is for superannuation to continue to be paid to mothers as part of a suite of measures that will support them, and ensure they are not disadvantaged by full-time nurturing while they perform the public service they provide in producing well-reared children.

Government policy needs to ensure that women are not financially disadvantaged in their later years by either directly providing this payment or negotiating with employers to continue paying it. While critics may say that financial systems could not afford to pay women superannuation under these circumstances, similar arguments were made some years ago in Australia when it was claimed that it would be impossible to pay superannuation to anyone other than full-time, male employees; yet now, at least in Australia, all employers are mandated to make such payments to all employees. Such a measure has *not* proven disastrous for business, industry, or government. It is something industry now factors into its employment costings. In the same way, that the Australian Government prioritises education, health, policing, and any number of other services, they could prioritise superannuating full-time mothers during children's infancy period. This, along with the wage to mothers I have proposed, may require a re-prioritisation of government spending and/or an increase taxes in order to pay for such a program; however, such prioritisations have occurred in the past – the Australian government-funded program Medicare, for instance, which began in 1975, is one such example. If the political will is there, budgets can be adjusted, as has been the case in the past.

## Education

In Chapter Two I pointed out that, in countries like Australia, there is currently no means by which the state transfers vital information to parents about nurturing. While this knowledge is routinely provided to practitioners within psychology and psychiatry, it is still not available to parents; yet it is parents who are most directly able to apply such knowledge to best effect. Access to the research evidence that can assist parents in understanding how their behaviour affects their infant's long-term wellbeing ought to be a parent's by right. If it is right for parents to be provided with vital information about such matters as how and how long to breastfeed, how often and how much to bottle feed, what foods to provide and when to feed them to babies; what acceptable sleep and rest times babies ought to have for their optimal physical development, and so on, then it can be argued that parents equally have a right to psychosocial information that will assist them to nurture in such a way that will enhance their infants' psychological wellbeing. Indeed, such education is essential if we wish to reduce the high numbers of children who are developing insecure attachment that may lead to negative mental, social and moral outcomes (as shown in Chapter Two).

The provision of information on nurturing infants therefore is not only a perfectly reasonable role for governments to adopt, but an essential role if we do indeed want to improve current mental health statistics and grow a greater capacity for wellbeing in society's citizens. I agree with Feldman's (2012) statement, that:

Our responsibility as caregivers, scientists, policy makers, mental health professionals, and concerned citizens is that every young child should be given the opportunity to learn how to love and every young parent should receive the guidance to make it happen (p. 389).

Supporting parents to acquire the kind of knowledge that will help them convey their love (and to understand what negates it) is immensely important. I suggest that if the state were to accept that social autonomy represented the correct view of maturation, and were to take on board the neuroscientific evidence showing how critically important it is for parents to understand the new data about nurturing, then it would readily accept the obligation to provide education to parents. While I suggest that the state ought to pay for the educational requirements of parents, however, I do not advise that the state administers its provision. I recommend that the delivery of education be directed through and by local community

centres or neighbourhood houses, where parents can meet and learn among their peers in local communities in a relaxed, informal atmosphere - a recommendation to which I will return later.

It may be argued that funding education programs for parents, together with the other funding measures I have suggested, would be too great an impost on society; however, funding the range of measures for mothers that I have suggested will, in the long-term, be a judicious investment if the evidence I have presented about various social problems being averted by providing greater financial, social and educative programs to mothers holds true. Any costs associated with supporting parents to adequately nurture their children in infancy are likely to be recouped through a reduction in the need for funded, ameliorative programs, resulting in a more efficient use of taxpayer dollars.

### **Value of Motherhood**

Another shift that would need to take place in order to counter the negative perception of motherhood – thus making it more attractive – is one that raises the profile and status of motherhood. As discussed in Chapter Four, motherhood is an activity that has typically attracted little respect or status. If, however, motherhood is to gain its rightful status and attract the high level of respect that I argue it ought to have, this fresh perspective must be actively encouraged by the state; for example, the state could fund an advertising campaign to promote the true value of maternal work, particularly in relation to infancy.

Gilligan's revelations about the gendered bias of moral development theory (also discussed in Chapter Four) showed that an attitude of caring was not only undervalued, but was viewed as inferior or naïve. While I suggested that if we were to undertake the same value survey today we would most likely find greater value credited to many caring roles, that of nursing in particular, I doubt that the value attributed to maternal work would be very high. Yet, as I have outlined in this thesis, the way we nurture our infants is of critical importance, and the role ought therefore to attract the greatest support, value, and respect. Women have the right to be proud of what they do, and to be given credit for undertaking such a loving, selfless role in the dedication of nurturing their young. Albrecht (2004) states this is a matter of equality. She says that the 'equality of women requires a political economy in



which being an actual or potential mother, being in need of care, and being responsible for the care of others, *are* the human norm' (Albrecht 2004, p. 148).

Until motherhood is released from the multiple negative connotations that are associated with it, women will still struggle to choose motherhood. To choose full-time mothering for the period of their child's infancy ought not preclude women having successful careers, despite taking time out of the paid workforce; nor should it mean accepting that there is no wage or superannuation; nor should it be assumed that undertaking maternal work also assume taking full responsibility for domestic duties; and nor should it mean accepting that it is a worthless occupation when all the evidence I have presented shows that it is the most important occupation that can be undertaken.

### **Supporting Families**

The family, I have previously argued, provides the place in which we come together - usually as couples - and raise children. In the best case scenario, families deliver not only nurturance to children but also sanctuary for the adults who reside in them. Archard (2010a) discusses families in terms of their functionality, claiming that, ideally, they are 'functionally defined' by what they do, namely to 'raise dependent and vulnerable children to adult independence' (p. 68). While I have rejected the idea that maturation is defined by notions of independence, but rather by interdependence, Archard is right to consider families in terms of their function rather than on composition, whether made up of one mother and one father in what is viewed as the traditional family. The ideal family, whether it contain one adult, two of the same gender, different genders, or multiple persons, is one whose members actively love their children so well that the children grow up feeling a powerful sense of belonging. While the ideal also contains a breastfeeding mother, fathers and/or same sex partners or grandparents can communicate the kind of love that will engender a sense of belonging in a child. The inherent problem with most Western nuclear families is that there are too few persons to adequately support the primary attachment figures while they are nurturing their infants.

As discussed in Chapter Five, Sara Hrdy says human mothers have always needed help from specific others to raise offspring to maturity (Hrdy 2000, p. 31). Despite technological advances, I maintain that this is still the case. Narvaez et al (2013b) also believes that

alloparents offered a 'built-in social safety net for mothers' which 'increased the chances of the child's survival and decreased the stress burden on the mother' (p. 14). It is this stress burden on the mother that I suggest accounts for the significant post-natal depression levels. In Western countries there is a high incidence of maternal depression among mothers, clearly a significant issue. Small et al (2014) suggest that the high number of women with post-natal depression has remained stable over the last 20 years, despite a range of interventions being tried. They also state that it is relatively difficult to predict who will be affected by postnatal depression. Small et al (2014) state:

The capacity to predict which women are most likely to develop depression during and after pregnancy also remains elusive, in spite of good evidence regarding a range of psychosocial and other factors that are associated with maternal depression – social isolation, stressful life events, a history of prior depression and/or anxiety, intimate partner abuse, less severe relationship problems, and physical health problems (p. 2).

If it is hard to predict those who will become depressed after childbirth, despite having multiple measures from which to make such assessments, then perhaps postnatal depression is not associated with the usual markers of depression, arising rather from the conditions associated with becoming a full-time mother. Small et al (2014) also state that the services that are currently offered to mothers are not reducing the problem:

What is clear is that mothers continue to experience a high level of psychological and physical morbidity across the perinatal period, and current service models and community level programs are failing to provide adequate support to thousands of women every year (p. 10).

I theorise that the reason the treatments for postnatal depression are failing is that those treatments do not address the multifaceted problems that go to the heart of the difficulties, one of which may be an absence of live-in alloparents. While it may be argued that the incidence of postnatal depression constitutes reason enough to place infants in care so that mothers are no longer subjected to the isolation of mothering, this would fail to address the needs of the infant. A mother returning to work to alleviate a new and difficult situation is very often not the answer for the mother either, who often longs for her baby. The answer, I argue, lies in greater social and financial support for mothers - to enable greater companionship, sharing and assistance to supply the kind of help that is unavailable in nuclear families. Narvaez et al (2013a) states that the further we move away from our

culturally-derived child-rearing practices that naturally evolved in hunter-gatherer societies, the more we will potentially undermine the natural benefits that accrued and experience a more troubled existence that fails to support our social development (p. 455). Bowlby (1988) too expressed his concern about the inherent difficulties associated with raising infants in isolation from support networks:

I want also to emphasize that, despite voices to the contrary, looking after babies and young children is no job for a single person. If the job is to be well done and the child's principal caregiver is not to be too exhausted, the caregiver herself (or himself) needs a great deal of assistance (p. 2).

If Narvaez et al and Bowlby are right, then families require greater resources – resources that replace the kinds of supports parents used to enjoy in extended families and close communities. Without such support, the family is less able to foster the wellbeing of its members.

The idea that the state has a responsibility to ensure not only the wellbeing of its citizens as individuals, but of the families in which they live, is not new. The United Nations in the *Convention on the Rights of the Child* (1998), says that

... the family, as the fundamental group of society and the natural environment for the growth and well-being of all its members and particularly children, should be afforded the necessary protection and assistance so that it can fully assume its responsibilities within the community (p. 1).

It is interesting to note that, although the convention appeared in 1998, there seems to have been little inquiry exploring *how* families can fully assume their responsibilities within the community. Certainly no universal form of education or guidance for parents has gained traction in Australia. It could be argued that this is the case, perhaps in part, because of the belief that the state should not interfere in the private realm of the family, such that educating parents could be seen as intruding on the family. As I have previously discussed, however, an ethics of social, emotional, and moral wellbeing requires the abandonment of the concept idea of public and private realms. Support for families requires that the state change its attitude toward its citizens from one of patriarchy to one of stewardship, a stance that I have argued would enable the state to assume a role that demonstrated greater interest in the wellbeing of families. Instead however, says Albrecht (2004), many political and economic policies have placed *greater* pressures on families. She states that:

At the beginning of a new century, neoliberal economic policies and values have drawn most women into an economy of low-wage work while, at the same time, shrinking the sense of a social responsibility for the well-being of families and the quality of neighborhoods they inhabit (p. 139).

These pressures, Albrecht (2004) argues, 'diminish and deprecate family work and relations of mutuality' (p. 139), while some families, she says, are 'deprived of the basic minimums of livelihood', and others 'maintain livelihood at the cost of just relations' (p. 139). In effect though, as Albrecht (2004) also argues, the Western liberal family has taken shape in a way that has assuaged the political economy, 'by sanctifying the primacy of competitive, self-interested economic activities' (Albrecht 2004, p. 141). I agree with Albrecht's appraisal of both the impetus that led to the dismantling of the extended family and the reason for the gradual acceptance of the nuclear family as the norm. I suggest we have been surreptitiously seduced into thinking our society is on the right path, with little questioning, but if we look to the divorce rate in the West, and the mental health and suicide rates, then it is clear that something is going wrong. Albrecht (2004) suggests that the acceptance of the nuclear family as normative has also enabled the state to disregard its 'responsibility to intentionally consider the issues and moralities needed to sustain families and communities' (p. 141). It is the importance of the community that I shall turn to next.

## **Communities**

I have previously discussed the obligation the state has to provide some kind of wage and superannuation payments to women while they undertake full-time maternal work; however, I have also advocated the need to provide social and emotional, as well as educational services, to parents, in lieu of such supports being absent in nuclear families. Further, I have posited that while the state ought to pay for these services, they ought to be run by communities, not administered by the state.

The reason the educative, emotional and social supports to mothers and their families should not be administered by the state is that parents ought to access these services as close as possible to their place of residence, so that they may be delivered in a non-threatening environment. These services need to replace the kinds of supports mothers once enjoyed in extended families - and in some cases still do enjoy. While it may be argued that women have been raising children in nuclear families for millennia and have successfully raised children, I think it is useful to revisit the attachment statistics which

indicate that around 40% of the population does not have secure attachment (Moullin, Waldfogel & Washbrook 2014, p. 3). When we add to this the high level of mental illness in young people, discussed in Chapter One, we can assume that something is going wrong. Whether this is in part attributable to intergenerational dysfunctionality, as a consequence of having lived in insufficiently supportive nuclear families for generations, would be impossible to establish, but, based on the evidence I have presented, that is likely to have been a contributing factor.

No matter what the cause of the high levels of insecure attachment and mental health issues in the population however, there remains a problem to be addressed. Supporting parents in the ways I have suggested above can go some of the way to reducing the negative statistics. Such a suggestion is not new. The *UN Convention of the Rights of the Child* say that the state has a responsibility to support parents 'For the purpose of guaranteeing and promoting the rights set forth in the present Convention'; therefore, 'States Parties shall render appropriate assistance to parents and legal guardians in the performance of their child-rearing responsibilities ...' (United-Nations 1998, p. 5). I suggest the most appropriate way for 'States Parties' to support parents is to provide funding to community centres to an appropriate level to enable them to provide the necessary supports to parents. This ought to happen in such a way that families gain a sense of belonging in their communities, enhancing in turn the parents' ability to endow their children with a sense of belonging.

Community houses and centres are best placed to deliver the kinds of services I have argued are required as they provide proximately-placed, openly inclusive structures. Bayer et al (2008) agree that we need to provide supportive centres for parents to attend. They argue that we urgently need parenting programs aimed at preventing later mental health problems in children, which in part can be achieved by supporting parents to reduce 'their personal stress as well as negative parenting practices' (p. 1166). Narvaez (2014) also believes that families must be involved and supported in communities if children and parents are to have the assistance they need. She articulates a holistic picture in the conclusion of her book *Neurobiology and the Development of Human Morality*:

Because children depend on adults to support them during early life when they cannot make many decisions themselves, adults influence the personalities of their

children by *how they treat them*. Adults set children on a trajectory of better or worse *being*. As made apparent among foraging nomadic groups, when humans are raised with companionship care – in healthy, nurturing environments – they are better able to become adults with full moral heritages. Adults all over the world can choose to put basic needs first so that everyone feels loved and supported, every family receives what it needs. With communities invested in childrearing, each child can develop her unique positive inclinations and flourish as an individual –in- community (p. 306).

There will be numerous ways for communities to provide support to parents, from group educative programs, to playgroups and drop in groups, to services where retired people are matched with mothers to provide emotional support, for example. What is important is that support services are offered as close as possible to where mothers, their babies and their families are located, and that these services are not only readily accessible but are the most natural places for families to come together for company, sharing, support, conversation, learning, and for having their voices heard.

## **Conclusion**

At the beginning of this chapter I said that, in any thesis in applied ethics which address real world issues, it is necessary to address the problems that arise from such proposals, distinguishing them from more analytical discourses. I argued that, as the state has an inherent interest in the health and wellbeing of its citizens, it ought to take responsibility for ensuring any required policy changes. I also argued that, as policy is driven by societal values, when new evidence surfaces it ought to inform policy change, particularly when such information contributes new understandings of human wellbeing. I also argued however that many states in the Western world assume that economic growth will provide for the happiness of its citizens; they have not understood that happiness is to be found in having well-developed social, emotional, and moral wellbeing.

I argued that the state needs to turn its attention to the growing body of evidence which shows where wellbeing actually resides, and then to accept that the foundations for this wellbeing are laid down during the nurturing process. I further argued that, if the problems I listed were not addressed at a policy level, then the state would not be doing what it is ethically charged to do, resulting in a gradual erosion of mental wellbeing in the population at large. I also argued that there are many precedents for governments extending their

governance to issues of public significance; such thinking should therefore be applied to the problems I have outlined. I further argued that unless the issues that I have raised in this thesis were energetically addressed, they would act as impediments to a mother's ability to provide optimal nurturing to her infant.

I listed some practical problems that arose from the arguments I made in support of my empirical claim - that mothers ought to become their infant's primary nurturer for the first eighteen months of life. I said they were principally the lack of remuneration, lack of superannuation payments to mothers, lack of parental education, absence of valuing of motherhood, and lack of support within the nuclear family. I argued that these problems acted as impediments to mothers choosing full-time motherhood. I also detailed why each of these issues were problematic.

I then discussed how we might go about finding solutions to the problems I listed. I argued that, as most of the issues need to be addressed at a national level and were of a significant nature, the state ought to act on the new evidence that has appeared in recent years. I concluded therefore that the state ought to support changes that would ameliorate the problems that discourage mothers from choosing full-time motherhood. I argued that the state ought to financially resource mothers, in the form of a wage and superannuation payments, for at least the first eighteen months of their infants' lives and thereafter either herself or her partner until their child is three years old. I also suggested there was a need for a thorough educative pathway, enabling parents to have the opportunity to learn what represents the most beneficial nurturing techniques which they can implement with their infants. I explained why the state ought to provide parents with the supports I believed necessary, reasoning that, without them, parents would find it difficult to put their parenting knowledge into practice, despite having received the necessary education. I argued that a system of supports, mimicking those available in extended families, was needed.

I finally argued that, while it was within the purview of the state to directly financially support mothers and provide the necessary social and emotional supports to them, support services ought to be delivered by community centres or neighbourhood houses. I reasoned that these centres could offer nearby places for parents to have the kinds of interactions

that would satisfy their needs for social and emotional contact, as well as places where they can keep up-to-date with new information about how to convey their love to their children, in order that those children may flourish.



# *Conclusion*

In this thesis I have attempted to bring together arguments that seek to answer the two questions I posed in the introduction: What if it could be shown that a child's ability to later flourish could be compromised by placing them into childcare facilities during infancy? Wouldn't we have to rethink the way we undertake making choices about infant caring arrangements? Answering these questions has led me to make a controversial claim: that mothers are the preferred candidates for undertaking the full-time nurturing of their infants for at least the first eighteen months of their child's life. This claim has been central to the story of this thesis. I will now recount the essential claims and arguments I have made along the way that have led to my final conclusion: the state needs to accept the evidence I have presented which shows that the social, emotional, and moral development of children is established during infancy. It also shows that the style of nurturing infants receive determines whether this development tends to be negative or positive. Public policy therefore needs to reflect this evidence by supporting mothers to undertake the primary nurturing of their infants for at least the first eighteen months of their infants life.

Each chapter has covered an essential aspect of the overall project. I have sought to weave together the ideas stemming from them in a coherent manner, and to address the most pertinent questions along the way. I began the project by discussing the term flourishing. I looked to a number of philosophical and psychological writers, determining from these that flourishing is something we want to experience, and want our children to experience. I have also shown that flourishing, happiness, and wellbeing are synonymous terms, at least for the purposes of this project. I concluded that we owe it to our children to provide them with the conditions that can enable them to flourish. I articulated a suspicion that childcare cannot provide these conditions. I also discussed autonomy, concluding that it should be something that parents can access, particularly women who have largely been denied it for so long. I argued that women rightly want to be independent, self-sufficient, and self-directing human beings.

I then examined attachment theory which contends that an attachment figure represents a safe haven for infants. The theory also posits that when children feel safe and accepted, and

are responded to in a timely way by an enduring other, they develop a sense of belonging which in its turn builds, emotional resilience and high level wellbeing. Conversely, when infants are parented in such a way that they do *not* develop a sense of security, they may develop pathologies which can result in dysfunctional thinking and behaviour.

I argued that neuroscience has confirmed attachment theory's premise, with evidence now clearly suggesting that the rapid brain growth and development that takes place during infancy establishes neural pathways in response to repeated environmental stimulants. These pathways can develop in positive or negative directions. The propensity for negative behaviours and mental health issues arises from adverse pathways, while beneficial pathways are linked to mental wellbeing and resilience. Neuroscience has also monitored mothers' and babies' brain functioning, observing distinctive neural firing patterns occurring in tandem with various maternal activities. This has enabled scientists to understand more about the way different interactions produce different responses. They have also been able to take precise measures of brain volume that have shown a rapid increase in brain volume in the first year of life, an increase that suggests a great deal of neural patterning being laid down during this time.

In addition, neurophysiologists have investigated how the body reacts physiologically to hormonal and behavioural changes, demonstrating that these bodily responses mediate social engagement systems. These research findings, have corroborated with many other studies examining differences in the way mothers, as opposed to fathers, respond to infant cues, showing that mothers respond with greater acuity and sensitivity than fathers. I claimed that a number of studies taken together convincingly demonstrate that mothers are the preferred candidates for undertaking the nurturing of their infants during the earliest period of life. While studies into the cortisol or stress levels of infants show that infants ought to be with an attachment figure until three years of age, it is not apparent that the attachment figure who undertakes the full-time caring of infants during the period of 18 months to three years needs to be the mother – it could equally be the father or other attachment figure; however, because of time constraints I have not discussed the possible implications of this. What is most important to have established is that it is the mother who needs to adjust her life to the greatest extent in the first 18 months of her child's life.

I argued that childcare must be disqualified as the appropriate alternative to a mother's nurturing care during this infancy period. There are two principal reasons for this. The first is that infants do not have an attachment relationship with their child carers before being cared for by them. Familiarity with staff does not equate to having an attachment relationship. The second problem is that it is impossible for someone charged with caring for four infants at one time to be responsive to each child to the degree infants need them to be. And there may be a third reason which I discussed briefly: that childcare centres are high stress environments where there are frequent displays of unregulated emotions which naturally inflame the emotions of other children. The cortisol studies clearly showed that infants in childcare centres very often have abnormally high cortisol levels. In addition, many studies have shown that frequently high levels of cortisol can have extremely deleterious effects on the brain. The ultimate conclusion from this is that childcare can damage neural functioning in the under threes.

Neuroscience also clearly shows that immense benefits are conferred upon an infant when they are nurtured with warmth and responsiveness in a low stress environment with an enduring other. A quote I provided in Chapter Two underlines the point. Siegel (2001) explains that:

Relationships that are "connecting" and allow for collaboration appear to offer children a wealth of interpersonal closeness that supports the development of many domains, including social, emotional, and cognitive functioning. Such collaboration may be essential in the creation of a coherent core and autobiographical sense of self (p. 78).

This information accords well with the attributes ascribed to those who flourish, discussed in Chapter One. We can say therefore that attachment parenting ensures infants will have the foundations from which to flourish. If flourishing is what we want for children, as we have established, then we need to work out how to make this happen? This question demands that we look to two of the tenets we live by – liberalism and feminism. I first look to liberalism.

While I established that the liberal state is undoubtedly the structure that is entrusted with the wellbeing of its citizens, a further investigation into some aspects of liberalism reveals some inherent problems. The first is its view that autonomy is the correct model to which people should aspire in life. It is seen as the epitome of maturation, with individualism, self-

sufficiency, and, some say, selfishness as its key components. Yet, according to happiness research, these are not only the wrong exemplars but are aspects of the self that work to stymie wellbeing. The second problem arises from the gradual turning away from more egalitarian focused liberalist principles in favour of an overvaluing of individualism and self-sufficiency, as canvassed by Nozick (1974). This is particularly problematic when I have called for greater intervention into family life by the state in the interests of supporting and educating parents.

I also examined feminism and discussed how it rightly sought to increase respect for and equality of women. It has highlighted the fact that women have been cast as second class citizens, and have been denied many rights such as equal access to education and equal pay for equal work. Women, feminists emphasised, had also been relegated to the domestic sphere, particularly after having children, where it was presumed they would stay for the rest of their lives. Rightly, women reacted negatively to these attitudes and circumstances. Women wanted to have the opportunity to be autonomous individuals, accepted that the liberalist model of autonomy was the correct model - believed to represent the height of maturation. Men, it seemed, gained autonomy from being in the workforce; therefore the natural solution to women's dilemma appeared to be to return to work after having children. This meant they would no longer devote themselves to their children and husbands. While this enabled women to have a career and children, it also reinforced the rejection of low status motherhood and entrenched the lack of respect for the role, resulting in women increasingly choosing to reject full-time motherhood in favour of autonomy. This led to an ever-increasing use of childcare for younger and younger children despite the research showing the detrimental effects of childcare on infants. This appeared to leave the project stymied.

I then turned to an investigation of the ethics of care. Its proponents suggested that it offered a useful contrast to other moral theories which were typically based in rules and rights; care ethics was grounded in the idea of emotionally-based caring and connection to others. Care ethics also inspired work on an alternative version of autonomy. The alternative version suggested that a more natural way of responding to people was to understand ourselves as interdependent in relation to them, not to identify ourselves as independent, self-sufficient individuals. I suggested we could develop this idea by adopting a

Millsian outlook, and calling this alternative kind of autonomy *social* autonomy. This, I argued, would offer a model which aligned well with the markers of wellbeing as described in Chapter One. It could also offer a truer model of maturation that was more facilitative of flourishing.

I then argued that, if we accept that social autonomy offers the ideal model of maturation, then we can see that we have been holding an erroneous view of what we should aspire to have. Happiness, I have shown, is not found in primarily working toward independence and self-sufficiency, but rather in having an attitude of oneness with others, having a communal outlook, and placing value in all our interactions with others. Knowing that our interactions with others are ultimately what sustain us, we can accept wealth accumulation as a secondary consideration. When we know and understand this, the conflict between the needs of infants and the needs of parents dissolves; we come to realise that nurturing our infants represents an amazing opportunity to know and connect on a level with another human being that cannot be experienced at any other time in our lives - and we understand that this enhances our real sense of autonomy, social autonomy, while providing our infants with the most important goods they will ever receive. It ensures that they can be cocooned in a secure loving environment at the most vulnerable stage of their lives, an environment that will provide them with a sense of belonging and social, emotional, and moral wellbeing – the conditions they need in order to flourish.

Large numbers of parents are unable to provide optimal nurturing however. Philosophers have tended to look at this group comprising people who appear *not* to love their children and to suggest that parents be *commanded* to love their children. I have argued however that the problem of negative parental behaviour does not stem from a lack of love. The problem is that there are two parts to love – the emotional, loving aspect that causes us to feel undying love for our children – and the active element that enables us to convey our love. I argued that the active part needs to be learned. If we have not naturally learned how to love from our family of origin, then we often do not know how to convey love, our infants will not feel loved, and they will not gain all the positive benefits of love. Without a sense of belonging, infants are likely to develop a sense of insecurity, have unregulated emotions, and be subject to mental ill-health as a result.

When parents are able to both feel love and convey it successfully, a unique bond between parent and child is developed, I argued, a bond which is unique to them. Each pair has come together in a journey that started the moment the child's mother discovered she was pregnant. During the period of pregnancy, a mother converses with the infant growing in her body, while the baby becomes familiar with her voice and with the rhythm of her movements. If the child is lucky, the other parent or extended family members also become involved in developing relationships before any of them meet face-to-face. Then, at birth, as I discussed, the mother's body is flooded with hormones that are so strong and overwhelming that the mother either instantly or soon after birth experiences a bonding with her infant that lasts a lifetime. Anecdotal accounts testify to this being the case, even cases when the infants are removed at birth. Then there begins a process in which love is expressed by the mother towards the infant, with the infant reflecting it back to the parent; thus begins the relationship that neuroscientists refer to as the dyad – it is close, intimate, and delicate. I argued that each mother's unique relationship with her own child drives a volition that ensures that she continually provides goods to the infant to an extent well beyond what she would ever have provided for another before, or perhaps ever provide for someone else's child. What the mother is expressing to the child is deep love, and in this expression she provides experiences for the child which ensure development of the best neural pathways imperative for their future, optimal development. I argued that it is too much to expect that others should be able to provide the same kind of care as parents offer. Others' bodies have not undergone the physiological changes which would ensure they too could love the child in the way mothers do. The physiological changes that take place in both the mother and the infant advantage mothers; they are able to nurture their own child in the most facilitative way. This is an additional reason why childcare at the most critical and vulnerable time of an infant's life cannot provide the kind of environment the infant needs to develop optimally.

In the final chapter, I addressed the policy implications of the claims I have made. I reiterated that it is the state's responsibility to make the appropriate and necessary changes, changes that it will only make when it heeds the scientific evidence. I argued that the state would need to take the matter seriously and place greater emphasis on the psychological needs of its citizens. It would also require a shift in the state's thinking towards a realisation

that placing all of its resources into economic development and wealth creation is not the answer to the happiness of its citizens. Simply trying to increase people's wealth does not of itself enable them to thrive and flourish. The state needs to invest in families and in the communities in which they live, and to actively ensure that its policies reflect the need for this investment to support improvement in the psychological wellbeing of its citizens. In the first instance it would need to recognise that providing resources to parents, such as education, and social and emotional supports is fundamental to lifting the wellbeing of the population. Such provision would reduce the need for, and the money spent on psychologically-based ameliorative services for later life issues.

I have argued that it is imperative to provide parenting education to parents, because they have the right to access the information available to professionals, information not currently available to those best placed to use it. For those who struggle to convey their love, it is even more imperative that they have access to the information that will support their understanding of facilitative nurturing practices. I argued however that it was not just a matter of supplying this information to parents; they also need to be provided with support that enables them to communicate their love successfully - they require a range of financial, social, and emotional supports to undertake this work well. Facilitating this ought to be the state's highest priority. If society is full of healthy, flourishing citizens, then we are all advantaged.

Finally, I will directly answer the original questions posed at the beginning of this thesis. I have indeed shown that a child's ability to become a flourishing individual can be severely compromised by being placed in childcare facilities during infancy, a fact that must trigger a reassessment of the priorities we have, and the choices we make, in the care arrangements for our most precious, vulnerable infants. The ramifications of the matters discussed in this thesis are not limited to infants however. Anyone with an interest in flourishing and how it might be enhanced will be interested in what this project has to say, as will those women who decide they will take time away from their employment to be with their infants, despite the pressures for them to return to work. These women choose to undertake maternal work despite the lack of remuneration, superannuation, status, respect, and social and emotional support attendant upon such work. It is not these women, however, who are canvassed for their views when issues pertaining to women arise. The women who are canvassed are

usually those with high profile 'professional' positions who enjoy respect and status because of their roles. We need to change this scenario so that motherhood is well respected and women are well regarded for undertaking the mothering role for a period of their lives. We will know this has finally happened when women who are spending the majority of their time nurturing are also canvassed for their views.



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